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# African Bird Club



**Bulletin of the African Bird Club**

**Vol 20 No 1 March 2013**

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Winter waterbird survey  
in Libya, 2011

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Globally important  
breeding site for Royal  
Terns

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Emerald Starling  
surveys in Sierra Leone

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Birds of Dindéfello  
Nature Reserve,  
south-east Senegal

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Counting *Macrodipteryx*  
nightjars for monitoring  
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Three new birds for  
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Black-chinned Weaver  
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Yellow-crowned  
Gonolek with yellow  
underparts

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Baillon's Crake  
breeding in Mauritania

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# African Bird Club

## The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

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ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Pete Leonard, [pleonard@care4free.net](mailto:pleonard@care4free.net)

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## The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

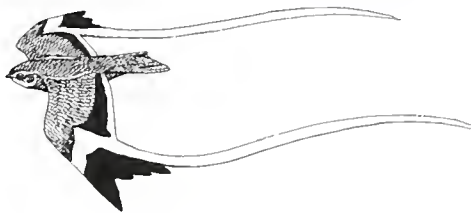
The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material

should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor ([editor@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:editor@africanbirdclub.org)).

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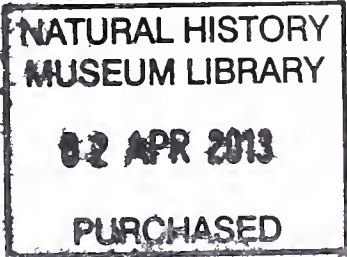
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## Front cover plate

Secretary Bird / Messenger sagittaire  
*Sagittarius serpentarius*, Kweneng,  
Botswana, 2 May 2012 (Ian White)

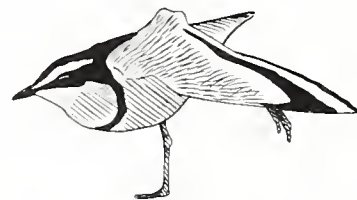
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# Club News



## PAOC 13, Arusha, Tanzania, 14–21 October 2012

The Pan-African Ornithological Congress is held every four years, and the 13th congress took place in Arusha, Tanzania, on 14–21 October 2012. Tasso Leventis, the ABC President, and five ABC trustees (Phil Atkinson, Anthony Cizek, Chris Magin, Stephen Pringle and Danaë Sheehan) were among the >200 delegates from across Africa and further afield. The Club was pleased to sponsor the attendance of Augustus Asamoah (Ghana), Sidi Imad Cherkaoui (Morocco), Raymond Katebaka (Uganda), Diana Nalwanga (Uganda), Joseph Mutahi Mwangi (Kenya) and Eric Marcel Temba (Madagascar) (Fig. 1), as well as the publication of the congress programme and abstracts booklet. Several talks featured work supported by the ABC Conservation Fund. To further assist the development of African ornithology, the Club also offered supported membership to all of those delegates studying at African universities.

The theme of PAOC 13 was 'Birds in a Changing Environment', and the stimulating plenaries

reflected how broad this topic is. Anthony Sinclair used >50 years of Serengeti data to emphasise that some African ecosystems, specifically some savanna types, are naturally highly variable in space and time. This makes disentangling the potential impacts of human-induced climate change a challenge and adds to the already complex task of understanding the causes of bird population declines or range changes in transformed landscapes. How important is climate change in landscapes transformed by cultivation and development, or within conservation units transformed by herbivores and fire?—this was the subject of a symposium and tackled by several other speakers. A historical perspective is crucial to understanding ecosystems that are naturally highly variable and requires strong African research institutions to monitor ecosystems over decades.

Pleasingly, several plenaries aimed to identify ways in which environmental change influences birds. John Wingfield emphasised that African research has a key role to play in understanding organism-environment relationships,

because ecosystems change at such fine resolutions: windward slopes of mountains can support lush forests, while rainshadows only a few kilometres away are occupied by dry savannas or grasslands. He pointed out that some environmental variability is 'predictable' to birds—which respond, for example, by double-brooding in 'boom' years, and delaying breeding in years when the rains are late—but that 'unpredictable' events can have disastrous impacts on populations. Why some species are unable to respond to what are 'predictable' events to other species is an important line of enquiry.

Will Cresswell demonstrated that there is some predictability to the movements of Afrotropical-Palearctic migrants, which would otherwise be expected to be rather flexible in their habitat use (because they move over very large areas). He discussed the 'chain-link hypothesis', which suggests the susceptibility of species reliant on a chain of habitats at specific sites across Africa. The loss of even one site could lead to the collapse of the entire system and to population declines. This highlights the importance of a pan-African approach, and two of the round-table discussions broached action for migratory birds in the Africa-Eurasia flyways (waterbirds and landbirds).

Monitoring changes at continental scales requires a pan-African approach to data centralisation and management, and this emerged as a major theme of PAOC 13, with a plenary, two round-table discussions and at least ten talks devoted to it. The technological revolution is facilitating the centralisation of birders' data and several institutions have vied for this valuable resource. But it appears we are some way from finding an institution with the capacity both to capture point



**Figure 1.** Four of the six delegates whose attendance at the PAOC was sponsored by the Club: Diana Nalwanga (far left), Raymond Katebaka (left centre), Eric Marcel Temba (right centre) and Sidi Imad Cherkaoui (far right) (Anthony Cizek)

Quatre des six délégués dont la participation au treizième Congrès Panafricain d'Ornithologie a été sponsorisé par le Club : Diana Nalwanga (à gauche), Raymond Katebaka (centre gauche), Eric Marcel Temba (centre droit) et Sidi Imad Cherkaoui (à droite) (Anthony Cizek)



data, which is necessary to tie bird distributions to particular habitats in highly variable African landscapes, and to vet data on a large scale.

The >170 talks in 29 sessions illustrated the strength of enquiry in African ornithology. It was particularly pleasing to see the depth of the ethno-ornithology symposium, which sought to place birds within the human landscapes in which they occur. The importance of this could not have been hammered home more vividly than by the reports from several speakers of the importation of vulture parts from across West Africa into Nigeria for the 'juju' market. Thandiwe Chikomo described the innovative approach of BirdLife International's 'Living on the Edge' programme to link improved livelihoods in the Sahel to environmental conservation and restoration, an approach which might be broadly employed to halt crashes in vulture populations. For example, Darcy Ogada revealed the links between vulture declines, an increase in scavenging dogs and thus in rabies, which has the potential to push national healthcare budgets skywards. A public-awareness campaign of the ecosystem services provided to humans by vultures was contemplated during the round-table discussion of the vulture crisis. But this will only work in more developed human landscapes that feature stray dog populations, and one was left ruminating the socio-political challenges faced by the IUCN's Vulture Specialist Group, established in 2011 in response to the crisis. Poisoning of vultures by poachers—including deliberately, to prevent wildlife authorities tracking their movements—is apparently widespread in East Africa and has reached southern Africa, with Andre Botha (co-chair of the Group) noting that 183 vultures had recently been killed by poachers in Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe. Sidi Imad Cherkaoui was voted onto the Group to represent North Africa at the meeting, and we wish him and the rest of the group well in their work.

PAOC13 was originally set for Nigeria, and the Tanzanian local

organising committee did a great job in stepping in. The event coincided with the tenth anniversary of the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI), Nigeria, one of just two such African institutes. It is the only field station dedicated to conservation training in West Africa and to date 52 West Africans have graduated from its M.Sc. Conservation Biology programme. APLORI co-hosted the closing gala dinner and its anniversary made a fitting end to a busy, successful PAOC.

*Contributed by Anthony Cizek*

### British Birdwatching Fair

Once again the Club attended the annual Birdfair held at Rutland Water in August 2012. Around 20,000 enthusiasts attend over the three days, and those manning the ABC stand were pleased to meet many members and Corporate Sponsors. The event proved to be very successful for the Club in that founder member John Clark, representing ABC, scored the highest total in the annual 'Bird Brain of Britain' contest, winning UK£1000 in the process (Fig. 2). His specialist subject was 'Birds of Hampshire', and while that is not part of Africa it was a fair win by just one point! In particular, we thank those members who gave up their valuable time to help on the stand. The 2013 Birdfair



**Figure 2.** John Clark (middle) receives the Bird Brain Trophy from TV presenter Mike Dilger (left), with ABC Chairman Keith Betton (Tim Poole) John Clark (au milieu) reçoit le 'Bird Brain Trophy' du présentateur de télévision Mike Dilger (à gauche), en présence du président de l'ABC Keith Betton (Tim Poole)

dates are Friday 16th–Sunday 18th August, and this will be its 25th year. We look forward to seeing many members there.

*Contributed by Keith Betton*

### ABC Conservation Tour to Zimbabwe and Mozambique, 17–30 November 2012

The 2012 ABC Conservation Tour to Zimbabwe and Mozambique was a great success, being extremely well organised by Chris Lotz of Birding Ecotours who contributed UK£750 to our Conservation Fund.

On arrival at Johannesburg, we met Chris for a few days in South Africa before travelling to Zimbabwe. At Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve, the highlight was an unexpected party of 23 Cuckoo Finches *Anomalospiza imberbis*. We spent two nights at Wakkerstroom, with time to find many of the rare birds of the threatened grasslands: 26 Blue *Anthropoides paradiseus*, 39 Grey Crowned *Balearica regulorum* and two Wattled Cranes *Bugeranus carunculatus*, 12 Blue Korhaans *Eupodotis caerulescens* feeding close to the road, four Denham's Bustards *Neotis denhami*, and many larks, including Eastern Long-billed *Certhilauda semitorquata*, Rudd's *Heteromira ruddi*, Pink-billed *Spizocorys conirostris* and Botha's *S. fringillaris*.

Pausing overnight at Polokwane on the long journey north, we were fortunate to find five singing male Short-clawed Larks *Certhilauda chuana*. We entered Zimbabwe via the Beit Bridge border post. Although traffic was light, formalities still took 2.5 hours. Crossing the Limpopo River we headed for Aberfoyle Lodge in the Honde Valley, where we found Red-throated (Peters's) Twinspot *Hypargos niveoguttatus* (Fig. 3), Red-faced Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza reichenovii* and Red-winged Warbler *Heliolais erythropterus*. Travelling further into the highlands around Nyanga we were fortunate to find eight Blue Swallows *Hirundo atrocaerulea*, an increasingly rare species (Fig. 4). In this area, we were very pleased to be joined by Tony Wood and



**Figure 3.** Red-throated (Peters's) Twinspot / Sénégal enflammé *Hypargos niveoguttatus*, Aberfoyle Lodge, Zimbabwe, November 2012 (John Caddick)

Julia Pierini, President and Vice-President of BirdLife Zimbabwe, respectively, who had travelled from Harare (Fig. 5). Our very productive meeting covered several issues of interest to both ABC and BirdLife Zimbabwe, and we handed over several pairs of binoculars for use in schools.

Next day we travelled via Mutare to Seldomseen Cottages in the Buvumba highlands near the Mozambique border. The small area of forest and grassland yielded Chirinda Apalis *Apalis chirindensis*, nesting Swynnerton's Robin *Swynnertonia swynnertoni*, Barratt's Warbler *Bradypterus barratti*, Fan-tailed Grassbird *Schoenicola brevirostris* and Miombo

Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris manoensis*. Near Mutare, a search of the miombo woodland produced Miombo Rock Thrush *Monticola angolensis*, Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus* and Cinnamon-breasted Tit *Parus (rufiventris) pallidiventris*, while the local golf course's avian highlights were Whyte's Barbet *Stactolaema whytii* and Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*.

Following six wonderful days in Zimbabwe, we crossed at Mutare into Mozambique. Our first destination was Mphingwe camp, where it was 44°C on arrival. From here we accessed the lowland forest around Inhamitanga. The rains that would motivate our main target to sing after months of silence were due

to fall only about one week later, but we were lucky. They arrived early, and after a thorough drenching an African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* started displaying enthusiastically. We were less fortunate with White-chested Alethe *Alethe fuelleborni*, which remained hidden from view. Several views were obtained of Livingstone's Flycatchers *Erythrocercus livingstonei* and a fly-over Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was an unexpected bonus. A visit to the wetlands adjacent to the Zambezi at Caia brought many waders including ten Greater Painted-snipes *Rostratula benghalensis*, while all around there were Southern Brown-throated Weavers *Ploceus xanthopterus*.

We then moved c.120 km south to Gorongosa Aventuras camp, which made an excellent base to explore the nearby national park, although Mount Gorongosa was temporarily out of bounds due to recent heavy rain. Our target species here were White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis*, Black-eared Seedeater *Serinus mennelli* and Collared Palm Thrush *Cichladusa arquata*.

The tour ended in Beira, where our time was enlivened by 60 African Pygmy Geese *Nettapus auritus* on an overgrown lake, while a roosting Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus* just outside the city was very approachable. However, the rain had not really reached the coast, so



**Figure 4.** Blue Swallow / Hirondelle bleue *Hirundo atrocaerulea*, near Nyanga, Zimbabwe, November 2012 (John Caddick)



**Figure 5.** Keith Betton, ABC Chairman, and Tony Wood, President of BirdLife Zimbabwe (John Caddick)  
Keith Betton, président de l'ABC, et Tony Wood, président de BirdLife Zimbabwe (John Caddick)



**Figure 6.** Keith Betton, ABC Chairman, and Buluwesi Murambiwa, the excellent guide at Seldomseen (John Caddick)  
Keith Betton, président de l'ABC, et Buluwesi Murambiwa, l'excellent guide à Seldomseen (John Caddick)



bird numbers at the marshes near the Rio Savane were still quite low, but Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris* and Black-rumped Buttonquail *Turnix nanus* were a bonus.

Among the many excellent local guides we met, we are very pleased to welcome Norman Saratia Mncube (Wakkerstroom) and Buluwesi Murambiwa (Seldomseen; Fig. 6) as supported members of the Club.

*Contributed by Keith Betton and John Caddick*

### New searchable DVD of Bull. ABC Vols. 1–10: special members offer!

The Club is pleased to announce the arrival of a new DVD containing Bull. ABC vols. 1–10 available as colour .pdf scans. Most of these issues are now out of print. This offers comprehensive review and search capabilities to find references to sites, species or any other word, and has been designed to operate on both PC and Macintosh systems, permitting rapid access to every article. The price to non-



members is UK£50, but we are offering the DVD at a special price of just UK£30 to ABC members (see advertisement p. 108). To order your copy visit the ABC website or purchase it at the AGM or British Birdwatching Fair. Any UK members who decide to dispose of old back issues are welcome to leave them with us at the above events as some people still prefer to buy hard copies of old issues.

*Contributed by Keith Betton*

### Georges Henry Oueda 1964–2012

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Georges Henry Oueda. Aged just 48, he was Director of Conservation at NATURAMA (BirdLife in Burkina Faso) and the single most knowledgeable expert in ornithology in his country, for which he was the ABC representative. Widely known and respected in the international bird conservation community, his contribution to nature conservation in Burkina Faso cannot be over-estimated. Georges was the driving force behind establishing and training local conservation groups at sites like Oursi-Darkoye and the Sourou Valley, two shining examples

of community-based conservation, and the recent designation of 12 wetlands in the country as Ramsar sites was largely achieved through his dedication. His plans to continue and expand this work have been sadly thwarted. Our condolences go to his family and friends. An appreciation of Georges' contribution to bird study in Burkina Faso will appear later in the year.

### The Birds of the Moroccan Atlantic Sahara

A book on the birds of the Moroccan Atlantic Sahara with an annotated checklist is in active preparation. Ornithologists are requested to send their unpublished records to Patrick Bergier, pbergier@yahoo.fr

### Les Oiseaux du Sahara Atlantique Marocain

Un ouvrage sur les oiseaux du Sahara Atlantique Marocain intégrant une liste annotée des espèces rencontrées est en cours de préparation. Les ornithologues disposant de données sur cette vaste région peuvent les transmettre à Patrick Bergier, pbergier@yahoo.fr



### Corrigendum Bull. ABC 19 (2)

In the note on the first records of Long-legged Pipit *Anthus pallidiventris* for Nigeria and Benin (pp. 206–208), the species is named 'Pipit à long bec' in the French summary and legends. The correct French name is Pipit à longues pattes.

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All advertisements must be prepaid: cheques made payable to the African Bird Club or payment made via the ABC website [www.africanbirdclub.org](http://www.africanbirdclub.org).

#### Copy deadlines

March Bulletin 15 January

August Bulletin 15 June



#### Rates and technical details

are available on the ABC web site at: [www.africanbirdclub.org/club/advertise.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/club/advertise.html)





### New Awards

The Conservation Committee reviewed 12 proposals ahead of the September 2012 Council meeting, and recommended four for funding. Five other applicants were requested to resubmit and offered advice on how to improve their proposals. Council approved all four recommended proposals, which were yet again fully funded by regular ABC sponsors. A total of UK£5,531 was therefore released, as follows.

#### On the trail of a West African enigma: expedition to search for Liberian Greenbul

Liberian Greenbul *Phyllastrephus leucolepis* is probably the most enigmatic and threatened bird species in West Africa. The area where it was originally found, near Zwedru in Grand Gedeh County, is one of Liberia's nine Important Bird Areas (IBAs), but is poorly known ornithologically. Ben Phalan of the University of Cambridge and Michael Garbo of the Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL—the BirdLife Affiliate in Liberia) were awarded UK£1,980 for an expedition to search for Liberian Greenbul, which has not been observed since the type specimen was collected in 1984. The expedition will build on recent efforts to locate the species by spending more time in the field and surveying during the more promising dry season. The personnel will be equipped to take photographs, sound-recordings and DNA samples. If this bird persists in West Africa and is a valid taxon, then it is of the highest possible conservation importance: the species' known range is tiny and its habitat is threatened by logging and agriculture. Even if the expedition is unsuccessful in locating Liberian Greenbul, it will collect useful genetic samples from other greenbuls from the type locality for comparison with DNA from the single specimen, will help to build the capacity of the SCNL, and increase knowledge of a very poorly known IBA. The award was generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis.

#### Creating community awareness of the biodiversity value of Lake Ol' Bolossat, Kenya

Olle Holst of Avifauna sponsored an award of UK£860 to George Ndung'u Muigai of the Nyahururu Bird Club. Lake Ol' Bolossat is the only natural lake in Kenya's Central Province. It covers 43.3 km<sup>2</sup> of which c.4 km<sup>2</sup> is open water and is the main source of the Uaso Narok River that flows through key conservation areas, among them Samburu National Park and Buffalo Springs. The lake holds over 100 bird species and is one of the 61 sites in Kenya recognised as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Key flagship bird species found here include Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*, African Black Duck *Anas sparsa*, Aberdare Cisticola *Cisticola aberdare*, Sharpe's Longclaw *Macronyx sharpei*, Jackson's Widowbird *Euplectes jacksoni*, African Marsh Harrier



Maccoa Duck / Érismaure maccoa *Oxyura maccoa* (Mark Anderson)



Sharpe's Longclaw / Sentinelle de Sharpe *Macronyx sharpei* (Adam Scott Kennedy / [www.rawnaturephoto.com](http://www.rawnaturephoto.com))



Jackson's Widowbird / Euplecte de Jackson *Euplectes jacksoni* (Adam Scott Kennedy / [www.rawnaturephoto.com](http://www.rawnaturephoto.com))

*Circus ranivorus*, Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* and Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, among others. The wetland is threatened by human activities in and around it, such as quarrying, uncontrolled grazing, poaching, fire, uncontrolled water



abstraction, urban development, and poor soil and water management. The potential and sustainability of this natural resource as an IBA largely depends on the engagement of communities around the lake. The project aims to empower resource users (fishermen, cattle grazers, papyrus harvesters, farmers) with information about this lake, through environmental education in schools and discussion with various community groups.

## Student intern projects at the National Biodiversity Databank (NBDB) Makerere University, Uganda

Prof. Derek Pomeroy received UK£720, generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to support the transport and subsistence costs of a number of student projects. These will include checking the routes of new high-voltage power lines to gather data on bird collisions (no datasets exist yet for Uganda, but many more such power lines are planned); contributing to monthly and twice-yearly transect counts of common birds and working on the data collected; data collection and analysis for long-term, ongoing surveys of Marabou Storks *Leptoptilos crumenifer*, Hamerkops *Scopus umbretta*, Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus* and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, and a wider scavenger study; and data entry (from many sources) for the NBDB, with some analyses under the supervision of the Data Bank manager, Herbert Tushabe.

## Avifaunal survey of Kitovu Forest, Kenya

Little-known Kitovu Forest lies in south-east Kenya, just north of Tanzania's North Pare Mountains and south of Kenya's Taita Hills. Due to its location within the biodiversity rich Eastern Arc forests of East Africa, it is probably an important site for various bird species with affinities to the Taita Hills and the Usambaras in the south. Edson Mlamba of the National Museums of Kenya received UK£1,971, generously sponsored by Olle Holst of Avifauna, for an ornithological

expedition to Kitovu Forest. The objectives will be to determine the avifaunal biodiversity, document the different habitats and investigate threats to the forest. Ornithological data will be collected using timed species counts, point counts, mist-netting and ad hoc observations. A bird species checklist for Kitovu Forest will also be produced. The expedition team will include ten young researchers, all interns in the Ornithology Section of the National Museums of Kenya, and will therefore also serve as a valuable training exercise and exposure to field research methods for them.

## Pan-African Ornithological Congress 13

The Conservation Fund supported the attendance at PAOC 13 in Arusha, Tanzania, of five African delegates (from Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco and Uganda: see Club News) providing US\$1,000 towards the costs of each. All gave presentations at the conference.

## Reports received

### Madagascar forest use

Charlie Gardner received UK£760 in 2010 to investigate the impact of habitat change on the bird and reptile fauna of southern Madagascar's spiny forest. The study site was the newly established protected area of PK32-Ranobe on Madagascar's south-west coast, part of the Mikea Forest Important Bird Area, recognised as the single most important site for biodiversity conservation within the spiny forest ecoregion. Incidental observations of Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* made during the expedition have already been published (*Bull. ABC* 18: 207–210, 2011). The main bird and reptile surveys were conducted at three sites across a gradient of land-use intensity at Ranobe on the western limits of the protected area. Birds were surveyed using the point count method, while reptiles were surveyed using pitfall bucket traps, into which they were channelled by 50 cm-high 'drift fences' of plastic sheeting. In total 53 species of bird and 32 species of reptile were recorded. Three important patterns emerged from the data:

Moderate levels of degradation can lead to an increase in bird species richness over lightly degraded areas; this is due to an influx of non-forest species while all forest specialists are retained.

This increase in richness masks a community turnover from forest specialists to non-forest specialists, and from endemics to non-endemics, with increasing degradation intensity.

Forest-dependent birds, including species endemic to the spiny forest ecoregion, appear more tolerant of degradation than has been previously reported, and were recorded even at heavily degraded sites.



Spiny forest / Forêt épineuse, Madagascar (Solohery Rasamison)





The results suggest that new multiple-use protected areas within the spiny forest ecoregion may maintain their bird and reptile diversity even in heavily utilised zones.

## Kenyan bird database

In 2010, Peter Njoroge of the National Museums in Kenya was the recipient of UK£1,000 to download birdwatchers' field list records from the internet into a database in order to monitor common bird species. An intern, Alex Syingi, was trained and employed on a full-time basis. Rather than create a new database as originally suggested, around 2,000 records from the Kenyabirdsnet webpage were uploaded into the Kenya Birdfinder database (part of the World Bird Database initiative by BirdLife International). This task continued until July 2011. All rarities records will be published in future issues of *Scopus*.

## Williams's Lark

Solomon Kipkoech of the Ornithology Section of the National Museums of Kenya received UK£1,090 in 2011 to undertake a population survey and threat assessment of Williams's Lark *Mirafra williamsi*, which is endemic to Kenya and occurs in two disjunct populations: one in Dida Galgalu desert, 20 km north of Marsabit, and the other near Isiolo (in and around Shaba National Reserve). Both sites are now recognised as Important Bird Areas, mainly because of the presence of this species. The survey technique used was 'flush and count'. Transects of 0.5 km were walked holding a 25-m rope tight between two members of the study team, while beating the vegetation (lava rocks and scattered grasses) to flush any birds. One observer was positioned near the middle of the rope / transect and recorded all of the larks flushed. A total of 16 Williams's Larks was recorded on 19 transects at three study sites. The overall population density was 0.61 individuals / ha. Where Williams's Lark was flushed, percentages of grass cover, lava rocks and *Barleria* shrubs were estimated within a 1 m<sup>2</sup> grid. The majority of flush sightings were in areas with numerous mature *Barleria* shrubs, confirming the reported association with this plant. One site (Selebule) with a few *Barleria* shrubs but no Williams's Larks was heavily grazed by cows, goats and camels belonging to a nearby Gabra community. Generally Williams's Lark appear to prefer habitats with less / scanty grass and shrub cover. The species may be sensitive to human encroachment, but the expedition concluded that this was not currently a severe threat, as evidence of human activities were scarce, probably due to unfavourable climatic conditions. Future threats to the species may be ecological and biological, for example changes to the land cover type or conversion of habitat to grassland or woodland.



Williams's Lark / Alouette de Williams *Mirafra williamsi*  
(Adam Riley / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

## Waterbird-aquaculture conflict

In 2012, Maurice Ogama, also of the Ornithology section of the National Museums of Kenya, received UK£1,500 for a baseline survey of the conflict between piscivorous birds and rural fish farmers. The study concentrated on Lamu West District in coastal Kenya, covering Mpeketoni Division on the mainland, where many fish ponds have been constructed and are at different stages of stocking with *Tilapia*. Focus group discussions were held with local fish farmers in order to collect their views on their conflicts with birds, while bird sightings were recorded opportunistically in or near fish ponds during random visits in the evenings / mornings. Farmers used various methods to control bird predation at their ponds, including throwing stones to scare birds away, employing boys with catapults to kill them, scarecrows, locally made noose traps, and nets. According to fish farmers, Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus* is the most significant predator and is also the major target of trapping and shooting. Other common predators are Great Egret *Egretta alba* and Little Egrets *E. garzetta*. Birds that are killed, especially cormorants, are eaten as a local delicacy. Kenya's Fisheries Department recommends the use of nets as a deterrent, but most fish farmers cannot afford to purchase them. The report recommends a variety of non-lethal alternative deterrents that could be deployed around fish ponds of different sizes.

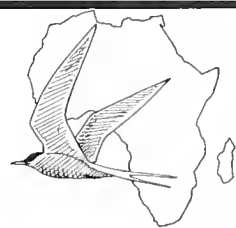
*Dr Chris Magin, ABC Conservation Officer on behalf of the ABC Conservation Committee*

The ABC website ([www.africanbirdclub.org/club/consfund\\_projects.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/club/consfund_projects.html)) shows the full list of conservation projects and awards made since the inception of the programme over a decade ago. **A remarkable total in excess of £126,000 has been donated during this period.** You can also view many of the final project reports, including full versions of those summarised above, by clicking on the hyperlinks on the webpage.



# Africa Round-up

Compiled by Ron Demey, Guy M. Kirwan and Peter Lack



## General

### Category changes of threatened birds 2012

The latest update to the IUCN Red List for birds, released by BirdLife International in 2012, brings the total number of globally threatened bird species to 1,313 (up from 1,253 in 2011). Of the 208 category changes, 120 resulted from a genuine change in the status of species (two improvements versus 180 deteriorations), 63 were a result of improved knowledge (of the status of species or the threats impacting them) and 25 from taxonomic revisions (either recently published or recently evaluated / re-evaluated by BirdLife). In the region covered by the ABC, the categories of 25 species changed. Four species have become Endangered: White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*, Rüppell's Vulture *G. rueppellii* (both previously Near Threatened), Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* and Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum* (both previously Vulnerable). Five have been upgraded from Near Threatened to Vulnerable: Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*, Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*, together with its former subspecies and recently split Timneh Grey Parrot *P. timneh*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus* and Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*. Five species that were previously ranked as Least Concern are now treated as Near Threatened: Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs*, Madagascar Jacana *Actophilornis albinucha*, Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* and the recently split Blue-moustached Bee-eater *Merops mentalis* (see also Taxonomic proposals). Also Near Threatened is Monteiro's Bushshrike *Malaconotus monteiri* (previously Data Deficient).

Two species, on the other hand, have been classified at lower threat levels: Grey-striped Francolin *Francolinus griseostriatus* is now Least Concern (previously Near Threatened) and Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda eximius* is Near Threatened (previously Vulnerable). In addition, two taxa are no longer recognised as separate species and consequently are now treated as Least Concern: Kungwe Apalis *Apalis argentea* (previously Endangered; lumped with *A. rufogularis*) and Kivu Ground Thrush *Zoothera tanganjicae* (previously Near Threatened; lumped with *Z. piaggiae*).

Source: [www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/global\\_species\\_programme/whats\\_new.html](http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/global_species_programme/whats_new.html)

### 'From the Arctic to Africa': new initiative to protect key sites for migratory birds

A new initiative to protect waterbirds migrating between the Arctic and Africa has been launched by Wetlands International, with financial support from the Arcadia Fund. The three-year initiative will engage local people and governments to develop a coherent approach to the management of wetlands along the flyway. Millions of waterbirds migrate each year along the East Atlantic Flyway, between the Russian Arctic and South Africa, via a chain of wetlands used by birds for breeding, staging, moulting and wintering. It includes Ramsar sites as well as nationally and locally important wetlands. The initiative will aim to limit the threats to key sites and thereby assure the safe migration of waterbirds, while simultaneously ensuring that the ecosystem services provided by these wetlands benefit local people dependent upon them. It will complement and enhance the effectiveness of conservation measures already taken by the European Union

member states in accordance with the Birds Directive of the EU.

Wetlands International offices in Senegal and Russia, supported by the head office in the Netherlands, will work to improve the management of key wetlands along the flyway. Together they will promote cooperation, networking and exchange by site managers at three levels: the ecoregion, subregion and entire flyway. The initiative will start with the ecoregions of the Arctic coastal tundra in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, an internationally important area for breeding and staging birds in Russia, and the Senegal River Delta with the focus on Djoudj National Park in Senegal and Diawling National Park in Mauritania. The transboundary site Djoudj-Diawling is of international importance for many northern migrants during the non-breeding period as well as for waterbirds resident in the region or intra-African migrants.

Source: Wetlands International press release, December 2012

### Amur Falcon escapes from 'hell'

An adult female satellite-tracked Amur Falcon *F. amurensis*, which was fitted with a 5-g tag in early January 2010 in South Africa, was tracked (for the third time) in spring 2012 over the Indian Ocean to its breeding grounds west of Beijing in China. It departed south again in the first half of October to arrive on 4 November at Doyang Reservoir, eastern India, which region has recently become infamous for the slaughter of these birds, with the staggering figure of 120,000–140,000 birds estimated to be killed annually there ([www.conservationindia.org/campaigns/amur-massacre](http://www.conservationindia.org/campaigns/amur-massacre)). The tagged female also visited the area in autumn 2011, prior to knowledge of this conservation outrage becoming widely known. The researchers had



Amur Falcon / Faucon de l'Amour  
*Falco amurensis* (Desire Darling)

some anxious days, but finally, on 14 November, the bird departed and started her crossing of the Indian Ocean on 17 November, some 400 km south of Mumbai (Bombay), further south than in previous years. By 20 November, the female was just 240 km from the coast of Somalia in East Africa and by 13 January she had returned to her regular wintering grounds around Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. In 2010, the bird arrived in Somalia on 21 November, and on 22 November in 2011.

Source: B.-U. Meyburg in litt.  
November 2012 and January 2013

### Movements of immature European Honey Buzzards tracked across tropical Africa

European Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* normally first breed when they are 3+ years old and are believed to remain in their wintering areas until they are two years old. To study the movements of immatures during the first years of their lives, six nestlings were equipped with satellite transmitters in south-west Sweden. After crossing the Sahara in October, all of them remained some time in the West African Guinea savanna zone, between Mali and Nigeria, between 09.9–13.6°N. Four of the five individuals whose transmitters continued to function moved further south and south-east, mainly in

November, to 01.7–09.8°N. Three immatures continued to perform extensive movements, travelling 2,430–3,990 km in 13–14 months, thereby visiting several different sites. Adults exhibit a different migration pattern, as they fly directly to their wintering areas where they remain within a relatively small territory. The movements of immature Honey Buzzards prior to their first northbound migration may be associated with responses to seasonal changes in the weather in the tropics and prospecting behaviour. Possibly, these young birds also avoid intraspecific competition with adults. The degradation and fragmentation of tropical forests may enhance this behaviour as relatively little suitable habitat where they can stay for longer periods now remains.

Source: Ardea 100, pp. 157–162

### Whinchat declines not linked to Africa

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* has been declining rather rapidly in many parts of its breeding range in Europe. It spends the northern winter south of the Sahara and the species' winter ecology has now been studied in detail by Mark Hulme and Will Cresswell of St. Andrews University, based on field work in central Nigeria. Densities were highest in farmed areas with short vegetation but density seemed independent of most habitat variables measured. Foraging behaviour also did not vary between habitats. It appears that Whinchats occur at well below the potential carrying capacity and remain at quite high density where they are present. The authors' overall conclusion is that recent population declines in the breeding grounds are not linked to the situation in the winter quarters in Africa.

Source: Ibis 154, pp. 680–692

### North Africa

#### New breeding species in Algeria

Several notes in *Alauda* document recent breeding by species not previously or only seldom recorded as doing so in Algeria: Common

Pochard *Aythya ferina* at Lake Régaia in 2009 and 2010; Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* at Dayet El-Kerfa in 2010; European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and Laughing Dove *S. senegalensis* at Annaba; and more than 50 nests of Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* were found in the Oued Righ Valley, where the species was found to be resident.

Sources: Alauda 80, pp. 151–152, 153–154, 293–294, 295–300

### Hope for Oryx and Addax in Tunisia

Conservation work is helping Tunisia restore its once vibrant large mammal fauna. Desert species, such as Ostrich *Struthio camelus* and Dorcas Gazelle *Gazella dorcas*, enjoy the relative safety of the semi-wild in restored habitats within a network of protected areas. The most striking success is probably the return of the Scimitar-horned Oryx *Oryx dammah* and Addax *Addax nasomaculatus*, which existed in large herds but are now considered Extinct in the Wild and Critically Endangered by IUCN respectively. The first group of oryx was brought back to Tunisia 27 years ago. Several other imports have occurred since then and there are now c. 180 individuals in four protected areas (Bou Hedma, Sidi Toui, Oued Dekouk and Dghoumes). In collaboration with the Sahara Conservation Fund, Marwell Wildlife is assessing the impact of increasing numbers of oryx on their habitat and the effects of limited habitat on the performance of the population in Dghoumes National Park. The results will help inform management of the species, and create a practicable monitoring system that could be applied more widely. Meanwhile, the herd of addax that was reintroduced to Djebil National Park in 2007 is doing well. Births are monitored so that calves can be identified and selected for future translocation to Senghar National Park, to help achieve long-term goals for the restoration of this species in the Grand Erg Oriental.

Source: [www.wildlifeextra.com/gol/news/tunisia-addax.html](http://www.wildlifeextra.com/gol/news/tunisia-addax.html)





Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse / Ganga à ventre brun *Pterocles exustus* (Dick Forsman)

### Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse reappears in Egypt

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* was formerly common in the northern and central Nile Valley of Egypt, but this population, which was accorded subspecific status, under the name *P. e. floweri*, was in decline by the 1920s and was last recorded, in March 1979, south of Luxor. As a result the subspecies *floweri* was widely considered to be extinct. However, in March–May 2012, a team of German and Austrian ornithologists rediscovered *P. exustus* in Egypt, making a series of observations involving up to 100 birds, some of them documented with photographs, in the region of Al Bahnasa, between Giza and Luxor. To date, it has been impossible to prove that this population can be confidently ascribed to *P. e. floweri*, but the observations do provide conclusive proof of the species' survival in Egypt.

Source: Dutch Birding 34, pp. 213–218

### Village Weaver observed in southern Egypt

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* occurs across much of sub-Saharan Africa, but the only records from further north (in the Cape Verdes and Portugal) appear to have involved escapes from captivity. In May 2006, an adult male was



Village Weaver / Tisserin gendarme *Ploceus cucullatus* (Ken Burton)

photographed at the Egyptian vagrant hotspot of Abu Simbel (see, for example, *Bull. ABC* 19: 137), in the far south of the country, constituting what appears to be the first record of a wild bird in Egypt and the Western Palearctic, and perhaps mirroring a recent increase in the species' numbers and range in neighbouring Sudan.

Source: Dutch Birding 34, pp. 316–319

### Atlantic Ocean islands

#### Azores Bullfinch needs your help

Since 2003, the Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula murina* has benefitted

considerably from a highly successful conservation project, operated by BirdLife's Portuguese Partner and its official Species Guardian. Already >250 ha of natural forest has been restored by replanting 150,000 native saplings. As a result, the bullfinch population has stabilised and its threat level has been downlisted to Endangered. However, more work is needed to ensure the species' long-term future: the priority is continued forest restoration and maintenance, but controlling invasive plants is also important. Support for the project has come from several international sources, with the main funding being provided by the Azorean government and the EU Commission via two substantial grants. Now these grants have come to an end, and finding funds to keep this flagship project running is an urgent priority. To spearhead the fundraising effort and keep a vital project team in place, a new campaign has been launched, see [http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/let-s-preserve-the-azores-bullfinch?website\\_name=PreserveAzoresBullfinch](http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/let-s-preserve-the-azores-bullfinch?website_name=PreserveAzoresBullfinch).

Source: BirdLife International press release, February 2013

### Cape Verde Shearwater in Madeira

In April 2012, a Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris edwardsii* was found amid a colony of Cory's Shearwaters *C. diomedea borealis* on Selvagem Grande, in the Madeiran archipelago. It was the second record for the islands, following a dead individual in June 2005; as its name suggests, Cape Verde Shearwater is known to breed only in the Cape Verde archipelago.

Source: Dutch Birding 34, pp. 310–311

### Common Buzzard survey on Madeira

A survey was conducted in May–June 2008 to determine the population size and distribution of Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* on Madeira. Distance sampling on foot was carried out along 87.6 km of transects. The species was present in small numbers in all areas sampled.



Population size was estimated at 409 individuals at a density of 0.55 buzzards / km<sup>2</sup>.

Source: *Ardeola* 59, pp. 145–155

### White-tailed Tropicbird in the Cape Verdes

Chronologically the second record for the Western Palearctic and the second for the archipelago, a White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* was photographed at sea off the island of Santiago in May 2011; it was perhaps the same bird as that recorded in the Azores in October of the same year (see *Bull. ABC* 19: 138).

Source: *Dutch Birding* 34, pp. 312–313

### West and Central Africa

#### Diet of Eurasian Spoonbills breeding in Mauritania not involved in population decline

The population of the endemic subspecies *balsaci* of Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* breeding on the Banc d'Arguin, in north-west Mauritania, has decreased from c.6,000 individuals in 1998–2002 to c.2,500 in recent years. The causes of this dramatic decline are unknown. Jan Veen and co-workers investigated whether it is correlated with a change in composition of the birds' diet. By analysing their droppings, they found that the spoonbills' diet consisted almost exclusively of shrimp (59.7%) and small fish (35.4%). Diet composition fluctuated considerably between years during the study period, but there were no significant trends that could be linked to the population decline. The researchers therefore recommend a more detailed ecological study, including a quantitative analysis of food intake and foraging conditions. This should be combined with observations on other factors possibly affecting breeding success, such as predation by Common Jackals *Canis aureus* and flooding of the colonies by high tides.

Source: *Ardea* 100, pp. 123–130



Eastern Imperial Eagle / Aigle imperial *Aquila heliaca* (Dick Forsman)

#### Most migrants fatten slowly for spring migration

Thirty-eight species of Palearctic migrants were studied using constant-effort mist-netting throughout the non-breeding season at Djoudj National Park in western Senegal by Nicolas Bayly *et al.* from The Wetland Trust. Twenty-four of these species used the site either throughout the northern winter or as a spring migration fattening area. The other 14 appeared just to pass through. Late winter and early spring when birds are preparing to fly north is the local dry season so wetland sites like Djoudj can be important areas. Nevertheless most species only accumulated sufficient fat reserves for the spring migration to Europe rather slowly, commencing in January–February. However, three accumulated mass faster and these were found to stopover for a shorter time.

Source: *J. Ornithol.* 153, pp. 931–945

#### First Eurasian Wigeon for The Gambia documented

The first Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* for The Gambia, reported on 22 January 2010 (*cf. Bull. ABC* 18: 233) has been documented. The first-winter male was photographed in a rice field near Madina-Sapu, Lower River Division.

Source: *Malimbus* 32, pp. 120–122

#### Satellite-tracked Eastern Imperial Eagle makes new records

A juvenile Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* fitted with a satellite transmitter in the Hungarian lowlands as a nestling in July, roosted in south-west Niger in November 2012, c.200 km north of Niamey. The eagle, named 'Gabi' after Gabriella Szabó, the Hungarian gold medalist at the 2012 London Olympic games, continued its migration through eastern Mali, northern Togo, northern Ghana and Burkina Faso (to follow its journey, see [www.satellitettracking.eu](http://www.satellitettracking.eu)). Previously, the only western African records were three sightings in northern Cameroon. The satellite-tracking study forms part of an EU project coordinated by MME, BirdLife in Hungary, in response to the increased poisoning of Eastern Imperial Eagles in Hungary. Security conditions permitting, MME are also seeking to study the bird's ecology in the Sahel. A similar study was undertaken in southern Niger in February–March 2010, on a satellite-tracked Hungarian Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*, by Housseini Issaka, whose report can be downloaded at <http://sakerlife.mme.hu/en/content/news#kerecsen187>.

Source: *J. Brouwer* in litt.  
November 2012

## Ten new bird species for Burkina Faso documented

In the latest issue of *Malimbus*, Marco Pavia and colleagues document ten additions to the country's avifauna, all from the south-west: Ovambo Sparrowhawk *Accipiter ovampensis*, Black Sparrowhawk *A. melanoleucos*, Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Black-shouldered Nightjar *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis*, Red-headed Lovebird *Agapornis pullarius*, Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera nivos*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*, Emin's Shrike *Lanius gubernator* and Tropical Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus*. For some species, range extensions within the country are also presented.

Source: *Malimbus* 32, pp. 57–81

## White-necked Picathartes population is stable in Sierra Leone

David Monticelli and others from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife in the UK) surveyed the White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* population in Gola Forest and surrounding areas of Sierra Leone. They found 157 active nests in 40 colonies, fewer than half of which were in the protected forest reserve. However, colonies in the protected area were mostly used annually, whereas those outside were sometimes active less frequently. The overall population appears to have been stable at least over the last two decades.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 22, pp. 170–183

## Survey of Abdim's Stork in northern Nigeria

The first large-scale survey of Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii* in northern Nigeria was conducted in 2010 by the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute. The species was found to breed in 53 villages and the population was estimated to be at least 538 individuals. Earliest laying dates were at the end of March–early April (mean clutch size  $2.7 \pm 0.11$  eggs), with fledging occurring in mid to late

July. Twelve tree species were used for nesting, with Baobab *Adansonia digitata* being the commonest.

Source: *Malimbus* 32, pp. 82–91

## African Pitta with brood patch in Omo Forest, Nigeria

On 27 May 2012, an African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* with a brood patch was mist-netted in Omo Forest Reserve, south-west Nigeria. This suggests local breeding by this species, for which there are no breeding records in Nigeria.

Source: *Malimbus* 32, pp. 122–124

## Forest discovery improves prospects for Angola's endemics

A large tract of near-pristine Afromontane forest has been found in Angola's Namba Mountains, tripling the amount of this habitat thought to be extant in Angola. The site meets the criteria for a new Important Bird Area (IBA), harbouring one globally threatened species, and assemblages of restricted range and biome-restricted bird species. Afromontane forest is the most localised and threatened habitat type in Angola. By the early 1970s, only 200 ha was estimated to remain, mainly at the Mount Moco IBA (85 ha), and perhaps in the Namba Mountains, where most forest was thought to be degraded by logging.



Swierstra's Francolin / Francolin de Swierstra *Pternistis swierstrai* (Ursula Franke)

Mount Moco and the Namba Mountains lie within the Western Angola Endemic Bird Area, which includes four restricted-range species associated with Afromontane vegetation. Two Afromontane endemics of global conservation concern, the Endangered Swierstra's Francolin *Pternistis swierstrai* and Near Threatened Angola Cave Chat *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, occur at Mount Moco, but the francolin is now uncommon. The Data Deficient endemic Grimwood's Longclaw



Angola Cave Chat / Cossyphe des grottes *Xenocopsychus ansorgei* (Pedro Vaz Pinto)



*Macronyx grimwoodi* is also found at Moco. Several other Afromontane specialists have been found only there or at 1–2 other sites in Angola, and face a serious threat of extirpation in the country. Angola's Afromontane forest holds 20 species, subspecies or populations of conservation significance, isolated and distinct from other Afromontane 'centres of endemism', the nearest of which is >2,000 km away. All 20 were recorded at Moco prior to 1970, but several are now rare or absent.

A team from the University of Jos, Nigeria, and Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, South Africa, visited the Namba Mountains in July 2010, to establish the extent and condition of forest, and to conduct bird surveys. Due to the difficulty of the terrain, they were confined to exploring a single area of 24 ha, in which they recorded 89 bird species, 56 of them in or adjacent to forest, including a significant population of Swierstra's Francolin and the other Afromontane specialists now hard to find at Mount Moco.

On their return, they examined satellite images from Google Earth, which indicated that there is currently c.590 ha of forest in the Namba Mountains. 'Compared with the forest at Moco, individual forest patches in the Nambas are larger and have greater area / edge ratios, making these patches less susceptible to edge effects and human impacts', the discovery team writes in their paper, published in *Bird Conservation International*. 'Besides this, the forest patches in the Nambas are in better condition, showing fewer signs of human disturbance. This is likely to be a consequence of the ruggedness of the terrain, and its unsuitability for establishment of human communities.' But they add: 'Despite the limited extent of Afromontane forest in Angola, threats to it from human activities and its high biodiversity value, none of it is formally protected, putting it at risk of becoming the first Afromontane centre of endemism to be lost...' The Nambas deserve national and international recognition for their conservation importance, and along

with Moco are among the highest priorities for the establishment of new conservation areas in Angola.'

Sources: *BirdLife International press release, July 2012; journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=on&line&aid=8607521*

### Mount Moco project boosted

In July 2010 the Mount Moco Project ([www.mountmoco.org](http://www.mountmoco.org)), with support from the Rufford Small Grants Foundation and the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, constructed the first native tree nursery on the slopes of Mount Moco, with the long-term aim of reforesting Angola's highest mountain and home to a vital population of the Endangered Swierstra's Francolin *Pternistis swierstrai*, one of the country's rarest birds. Over the next 18 months, the pilot nursery project successfully grew native forest trees, and in October 2011 the first of these were successfully planted on the mountain, with more in March 2012. Following the success of the pilot project, and with fresh financial assistance from the Gulf Agency Company, a new nursery facility was constructed with the capacity to hold 400–500 trees at one time. The expanded nursery will also assure the employment of at least one additional person from Kanjonde village (three were employed by the original nursery) and will greatly improve efforts to conserve the fragile habitat at Mount Moco.

Source: M. Mills in litt. July 2012

## East Africa

### Charcoal production threatens 9% of Somalia's avifauna

An estimated four million sacks of charcoal waiting to be exported, with a further four million sacks stockpiled in and around the city, and at the village of Buur Gabo, near the Kenyan border were found when African Union Mission in Somalia (Amisom) forces took control of the port city of Kismayo in southern Somalia in September 2012. Much of the charcoal leaving Kismayo is suspected to have come

from the Jubba Valley, part of an Endemic Bird Area (EBA) shared between Somalia and Ethiopia, which includes six Important Bird Areas (IBAs) on the Somali side. All of the charcoal at Buur Gabo is thought to have come from the mangroves and *Acacia* forests of the Laag Badaana (Bush Bush National Park) IBA, which is contiguous with the Boni Forest Reserve on the Kenyan side of the border, part of the East African Coastal Forests EBA. Further stocks of charcoal subsequently found at Badhaadhe, north of Laag Badaana, also probably came from the national park. Between them, the Jubba forests and Laag Badana are home to more than 50 bird species not found anywhere else in Somalia, representing 9% of Somalia's avifauna, and their survival in the country is threatened by the scale of charcoal production. Although the UN and the Somali government have banned the export of charcoal, these have resumed because the port is under control of forces with no allegiance to the president. It is thought likely that the fragile *Acacia* dry-forest ecosystems in particular will be unable to recover, while Laag Badana holds the most important remnant of Somalia's mangroves.

Source: *BirdLife International press release, December 2012*

### New secretary for the East African Rarities Committee

The East African Rarities Committee has a new secretary, Kenyan resident Nigel Hunter. The committee covers Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and collects details of the first to fifth records of all rare species for each country. The EARC prefers to receive records in electronic form via e-mail sent to [nigelhunter@timbale.org](mailto:nigelhunter@timbale.org). Photographs are especially useful, but if not available then a full written description is required. Past records of rare species are also sought. For those without access to the internet, records can also be submitted by post to Nigel Hunter, PO Box 24803, Karen 00502, Nairobi, Kenya.

Source: D. Fisher in litt. October 2012



## Poverty reduction and biodiversity harmonious in Kenya

The BirdLife Africa Partnership received a renewed boost to its work in poverty reduction and policy making when the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID) provided additional funding in October 2010. One of the sites benefiting from the project is Dakatcha Woodlands north-west of Malindi in coastal Kenya, which has been identified as an Important Bird Area (IBA) due to the presence of globally threatened birds such as Sokoke Scops Owl *Otus ireneae*, Sokoke Pipit *Anthus sokokensis* and Clarke's Weaver *Ploceus golanidi*, all of which are highly restricted in range. NatureKenya (the BirdLife partner in Kenya) recently achieved success when the National Environment Management Authority officially rejected a proposal to convert 10,000 ha of Dakatcha IBA to grow the biofuel crop *Jatropha curcus* (see *Bull. ABC* 19: 13–14).

Local communities continue to benefit from initiatives supported by this project, via the IBA Site Support Groups, which comprises two main umbrella groups encompassing over seven other groups. Initiatives include bee-keeping, with over 300



Sokoke Scops Owl / Petit-duc d'Irène  
*Otus ireneae* (Chege Wa Kariuki)

beehives and a honey-processing unit, and non-native tree species are now being grown to meet local demands for wood without impacting on the surrounding native woodland.

A tourist site has also been established at Mekatilili, which is part of Dakatcha, while the Dakatcha Community Forest Association (CFA) has been formally registered to engage with the Kenya Forest Service in managing and protecting the area. Local communities have also formed a Charcoal Producers Association to sustainably produce charcoal, thereby further reducing negative impacts on the area.

Source: BirdLife International  
press release, July 2012

## Genetically distinct lion population discovered in Ethiopia

A team of international researchers has provided the first comprehensive DNA evidence that 15 captive lions *Panthera leo* at the Addis Ababa Zoo in Ethiopia are genetically unique and is urging immediate conservation action to preserve this endangered population. While it has long been noted that some lions in Ethiopia have a large, dark mane, extending from the head, neck and chest to the belly, as well as being smaller and more compact than other lions, it was not known until now if these lions represent a genetically distinct population. It has previously been suggested that no lions comparable to those at Addis Ababa Zoo still exist in the wild. However, the researchers say that, according to the Ethiopian authorities, lions with a similar appearance still exist in the east and north-east of the country, notably in the Babilie Elephant Sanctuary near Harar and southwards to Hararghe. These regions should thus be prioritised for field surveys. Lion numbers are in serious decline and two distinct populations of lion, the North African Barbary lions and the South African Cape lions have already become extinct in the wild.

Source: [www.wildlifeextra.com/gol/news/addis-ababa-lions.html](http://www.wildlifeextra.com/gol/news/addis-ababa-lions.html)

## Forbes-Watson's Swift does breed in Arabia

Forbes-Watson's Swift *Apus berliozi* is widely considered to breed solely in northern Somalia and on the Yemeni-administered island of Socotra, with two subspecies, the nominate on Socotra and *A. b. bensoni* in Somalia, and some birds apparently wintering as far south as coastal Kenya. There were also suggestions in the literature that the species breeds in southern Arabia, especially in Omani Dhofar. Fresh study of museum specimens previously identified as Common Swift *A. apus pekinensis* or Pallid Swift *A. pallidus*, and collected in southern Arabia, has revealed all of them to be Forbes-Watson's Swifts, probably of the subspecies *bensoni*. The specimens, all taken in south-west Oman or southern Yemen, were confidently identified based on a combination of plumage, especially vocal, and biometric characters, which eliminate all other possible species. The authors of the research demonstrate that *A. berliozi* is a locally common summer visitor to the southern Arabian coast and its immediate hinterland, as well as on a handful of offshore islands. The migrant or partially migratory *A. b. bensoni* is separable only on its marginally longer wing from nominate *A. berliozi* (other characters claimed to differentiate it prove unreliable), with the latter subspecies apparently resident on Socotra, or largely so.

Source: *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.*  
132, pp. 194–206

## Tana River Delta is newest Ramsar Site in Africa

Conservationists are celebrating the declaration of Kenya's Tana Delta as one of the newest Ramsar sites in Africa. In a statement from the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, the Assistant Advisor for Africa, Ms Ako Charlotte Eyong described the delta as the second most important estuarine ecosystem in Eastern Africa. The delta is one of the most neglected regions in the country,

with the majority of people living below the poverty line, but in addition to being an internationally important area for birds and wildlife, the wetland is vital for the herders who depend on the water and grasslands during the dry season, farmers who cultivate rice, mangoes and other crops, and fishermen who work its lakes and watercourses. *NatureKenya* has worked with local communities for six years to promote ecological sustainability in the delta and is currently running a humanitarian campaign to assist the victims of recent ethnic violence through provision of basic food items. Acknowledging the importance of deltas for the economy as well as ecological services, *NatureKenya* is collaborating with the Prime Minister's office to develop a land-use plan for long-term sustainable management of the delta to provide economic prosperity, stable social conditions and lasting environmental quality. Designation of the Tana Delta as a wetland of international importance had stalled in recent years. In 2008 *NatureKenya* supported the Kenya Wildlife Service's efforts to jump-start the process, as well as playing a major role in creating local awareness of the importance of including the Tana Delta on the Ramsar list. Other wetlands in Kenya designated as Ramsar sites are Lakes Nakuru, Naivasha, Bogoria, Baringo and Elementaita.

*Source: BirdLife International press release, October 2012*

### **Yellow-throated Apalis in good health**

Yellow-throated Apalis *Apalis flavigularis* is confined to three massifs in southern Malawi, and is this country's sole endemic. Tiwonge Mzumara and others surveyed the species in 41 forest patches on one of the massifs, Mount Mulanje. The species favoured forest edges and even occurred in some very small patches. The overall estimate was 7,900 birds only in the cedar forest habitat on Mount Mulanje, and as the species occurs in other native forest types the

population could approach or even exceed 10,000 on Mulanje alone.

*Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. 22, pp. 184–192*

### **Indian Ocean islands**

#### **Schoolchildren come to rescue of threatened flycatcher**

An after-school club, the Friends of the Flycatcher, is helping to keep Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina* watered. The club is based on the flycatcher's stronghold island of La Digue and has installed eight bird baths at different locations on the island for the benefit of the iconic bird. Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher favours native *Terminalia catappa* and *Calophyllum inophyllum* broadleaf plateau woodland in proximity to wetland areas that are important breeding grounds for insects, which the birds feed on. But, in the dry season the marshes dry out, and the birds have been observed visiting domestic water sources placing them in danger of drinking detergent and being caught by cats. Nature Seychelles (BirdLife Partner) has been promoting the conservation of the Critically Endangered flycatcher through an advocacy and education project, and the project is part of the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme and is supported by the Species Champion, Viking Optical. Although still in its infancy, the club has been involved in a number of activities including cleaning up the island on World Clean-up Day and planting trees in the Veuve Reserve.

*Source: BirdLife International press release, January 2013*

#### **Madagascar's palms near extinction**

Eighty three percent of Madagascar's palms are threatened with extinction, putting the livelihoods of local people at risk, according to the latest update of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The assessment was undertaken by the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Palm Specialist Group, drawing on research by the Royal

Botanic Gardens, Kew. 'The figures ... are truly terrifying, especially as the loss of palms impacts both the unique biodiversity of the island and its people', said Dr Jane Smart, Global Director, IUCN Biodiversity Conservation Group. Palms represent an integral part of Madagascar's biodiversity and all of the 192 species assessed are endemic to the island. They provide essential resources to some of Madagascar's poorest communities, such as materials for house construction and edible palm hearts. Habitat loss and palm heart harvesting are major threats putting these species at risk. 'The majority of Madagascar's palms grow in the island's eastern rain forests, which have already been reduced to less than one quarter of their original size and which continue to disappear' said Dr William Baker, Chair of the IUCN SSC Palm Specialist Group and Head of Palm Research at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Populations of many palm species are at risk as land is cleared for agriculture and logging. *Ravenia delicatula* (Critically Endangered) is known from just one site, which is not protected and is being threatened by forest clearance to cultivate rice, and by miners searching for minerals and gems such as rubies. The recently discovered Tahina (or Suicide) Palm *Tahina spectabilis* has been listed for the first time on the IUCN Red List. Large enough to be viewed on Google Earth, it grows up to 18 m tall. A few months after flowering, the tree dies. With only 30 mature palms in the wild, it is classified as Critically Endangered, and much of its habitat has been converted to agriculture. *Dypsis brittiana* is known only from the recently established Makira Natural Park and may already be extinct; none was found during a 2007 survey. *D. tokoravina* (Critically Endangered) is targeted by seed collectors who fell the trees, of which fewer than c.30 survive.

'The national system of protected areas, managed by Madagascar National Parks, offers protection to some, but by no means all, of Madagascar's palm species' said Dr Russell Mittermeier, President



of Conservation International and Chair of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group. 'The key to saving Madagascar's palms, and its biodiversity in general, is strongly dependent on the closest possible collaboration with local communities—especially in this period of severe political instability during which government agencies are working well below standard. Unfortunately this extremely high degree of threat in Madagascar is not unique to palms.'

Well-managed seed harvesting and habitat protection can help conserve some species. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, has initiated several projects to protect some of Madagascar's most charismatic and threatened palms. One such project encourages local communities to protect the Vulnerable Manambe Palm *Dypsis decipiens* and the Critically Endangered *D. ambositrae* in the Itremo proposed protected area. For the Tahina Palm, the power of the horticultural community is being harnessed. Assisted by Madagascar's national seed bank, sustainably harvested seeds are sold via a commercial palm seed merchant. The money returns to local people who use it to renovate buildings and grow food more productively.

'While some species of palm may respond to focused species conservation action, securing the future for Madagascar's palms requires wide-scale efforts' said Jane Smart. 'Madagascar has made great progress to preserve its unique wildlife by conserving 10% of the island in protected areas. But a game-changing conservation effort is needed to protect the remaining habitat and create more protected areas, in line with the Aichi targets to save the world's biodiversity, which many governments committed to in 2010.'

Source: [www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/news/11273/Madagascars-palms-near-extinction](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/news/11273/Madagascars-palms-near-extinction)

## Southern Africa

### Hope as copper mining at Lower Zambezi IBA put on hold

The Lower Zambezi is an Important Bird Area and a national park, but has been threatened by a proposed copper mine in the area. Moses Nyoni, CEO of Bird Watch Zambia (BWZ), formerly the Zambian Ornithological Society (the BirdLife partner in Zambia), which has led a campaign to stop the mining plan said: 'This the right first step the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) has taken in this case. Our aim is to see the mining project eventually withdrawn. Short-term economic gains should never override long-term benefits to the country'. ZEMA's decision comes a few months after public hearings attended by BWZ and other interested organisations in June 2012. The project received little support during the hearings because the investor failed to address key issues such as job creation and impacts on biodiversity. Mwembeshi Resources Limited have appealed to the Minister of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection to review ZEMA's decision under the Environmental Management Act of 2011. 'BWZ and like-minded organisations are determined to ensure that Lower Zambezi is protected from this damaging development. We will continue engaging ZEMA and other government agencies as well as involve local communities by raising grassroots awareness. We will also demand a comprehensive cost and benefit analysis of the mining project' said Mr Nyoni.

Source: *BirdLife International press release, September 2012*

### Marabou Stork survival and population dynamics

During a long-term study into the survival and population dynamics of Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer* conducted by Ara Monadjem and colleagues in Swaziland, since 2005, 193 nestlings and 17 free-flying individuals have been equipped with

patagial tags in Hlane National Park, the only breeding site in the country, while breeding storks were monitored regularly in 2003–11. Between 19 and 31 pairs of Marabous bred annually and fledged 11–43 chicks, i.e. a mean of 1.05 fledged offspring per pair per annum. Survival rates varied considerably between age classes and the datasets analysed. Typically, first-year survival, with mean survival estimates of 64%, was lower than that of older birds. For the latter, the survival rate was 87%, based on free-flying birds, and apparently did not differ between subadults and adults. The study corroborated previous findings showing fecundity to be negatively related to rainfall during the breeding season. Although the exact nature of the relationship between rainfall, food and Marabou Stork fecundity remains unclear, the researchers suggest that increased rainfall during the breeding season represents increased cloud cover during this period of food stress when parents need to fend for themselves as well as for growing chicks. As Marabous require thermals for foraging, which are only available on sunny days, increased cloud cover may result in less soaring time and less efficient foraging. The metapopulation structure of Marabou Storks in southern Africa (including the colonies in Botswana and Zimbabwe) could explain the presence of 300–400 non-breeding birds in Kruger National Park, South Africa, a country where the species has not yet successfully bred. Juveniles are capable of dispersing up to 1,500 km after fledging, easily permitting them to cover the <100 km between the study site in Swaziland and Kruger National Park. The study showed that adults contributed twice as much as subadults and over three times as much as juveniles to the growth of the population. This means that the emphasis of conservation efforts targeting long-lived species should be on ensuring the survival of adults.

Source: PLoS ONE 7(9): e46434. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0046434



## More than 500 rhinos killed in South Africa in 2012

Rhino poaching in South Africa continues to worsen. By November 2012, a total of 528 rhinos (including both White Rhino *Ceratotherium simum* and the Critically Endangered Black Rhino *Diceros bicornis*) had been killed by poachers since the beginning of the year, with Kruger National Park being the hardest hit, having lost 320 rhinos. In 2010 and 2011, 333 and 448 rhinos, respectively, were killed in the country (cf. *Bull. ABC* 19: 16).

Source: [www.wildlifeextra.com/gol/news/2012-rhino-poached.html](http://www.wildlifeextra.com/gol/news/2012-rhino-poached.html)

## Taxonomic proposals

### Newly split and lumped taxa on the BirdLife 2012 list

Taxonomic changes to species occurring in the region covered by the ABC on the BirdLife International 2012 list include the following. Six taxa have been elevated to species level: Timneh Grey Parrot *Psittacus timneh* (split from Grey Parrot *P. erithacus*); Blue-moustached Bee-eater *Merops mentalis* (split from Black Bee-eater *M. muelleri*); Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe castanea* (previously lumped with White-tailed Alethe *A. diademata*); the Sahel-to-Kenya taxon Heuglin's Wheatear *Oenanthe heuglini* (separated from Horn of Africa and south-west Arabian Botta's Wheatear *O. bottae*); African Crimson-winged Finch *Rhodopechys alienus* (split from Crimson-winged Finch *R. sanguineus*); and Reichenow's Seedeater *Serinus reichenowi* (recognised as separate from Black-throated Seedeater *S. atrogularis*). Four taxa are no longer treated as distinct species: Loanda Swift *A. toulsoni* (subsumed in Horus Swift *A. horus*); Kivu Ground Thrush *Zoothera tanganjicae* (lumped with Abyssinian Ground Thrush *Z. piaggiae*); Kungwe Apalis *Apalis argentea* (subsumed in Buff-throated Apalis *A. rufogularis*); and Yellow-browed Seedeater

*Serinus whytii* (subsumed in Streaky Seedeater *S. striolatus*).

Source: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/>

### How many species of darters?

Recent decades have seen some dissension in the literature as to the number of darters *Anbinga* spp. recognised in the Old World. 'Bucking the trend' witnessed in many species of birds, whereby somewhat arbitrary decisions taken by Peters for his influential world checklist have had a profound influence on their taxonomy, in this case Peters considered the group to comprise three species, but many subsequent works have treated them as just one. Lacking was a robust reappraisal of the group's taxonomy. Now, morphological analysis of the major populations of darters from Africa to Australia has identified significant regional differentiation in sexual dimorphism, shape and structure of the pale cheek stripe, pattern and tone of the chin and foreneck, form of scapular feathering, and marking and tone of the greater wing-coverts. Further differentiation occurs in the proportions of the tail, bill and feet, and in bare-part colours, particularly in the irides and feet. Among the three major forms—Afro-Middle East *rufa*, Oriental *melanogaster* and Australasian *novaehollandiae*—qualitative differentiation in plumage patterning was almost of the same high order as that between these darters and the Anhinga *A. anhinga* of the New World. Furthermore, differentiation of a lower but still clear-cut order was found among African, Malagasy and Middle East populations of *rufa*, and between Australian and New Guinean populations of *novaehollandiae*. The authors of the recently published study conclude that *rufa*, *melanogaster* and *novaehollandiae* have speciated, and that Malagasy, Middle East and New Guinean isolates are subspecies of African *rufa* and Australian *novaehollandiae* respectively.

Source: *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 132, pp. 283–294

## Subspecies status of Mauritanian spoonbill verified

In 1974, the Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* breeding on the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, were described as a distinct subspecies *balsaci*, based on their somewhat smaller size, their breeding plumage lacking yellow on the upper breast, and their all-black bill. Theunis Piersma and co-workers have now revisited this subspecific separation for the first time by comparing molecular variation between those spoonbills breeding in Mauritania and their sympatrically wintering conspecifics breeding in the Dutch Wadden Sea, which belong to the nominate subspecies. The level of genetic differentiation indicates that gene flow between the Mauritanian and Dutch birds is much lower than among Dutch colonies on separate Wadden Sea islands. Field observations of individually colour-marked birds from the Netherlands suggests extensive dispersal within north-west Europe, with some introgression of *leucorodia* genes into the *balsaci* population. The level of dispersion between the two populations is estimated at c.4–5 individuals per generation. For example, in 2000 a Dutch-born *leucorodia* was observed feeding chicks in a *balsaci* colony. A colour-ringed male born in the Netherlands in 1997 and paired with an apparent *leucorodia* individual probably of European origin was seen feeding chicks in the Banc d'Arguin in 2010. There are also several observations of European-born spoonbills copulating with apparent *balsaci*. However, on the basis of the observed genetic differentiation between the two spoonbill populations, the subspecies status of *balsaci* seems entirely valid.

Source: *Ardea* 100, pp. 131–136

### Ayres' Hawk-Eagle or Ayres' Eagle?

In a recent note concerning eagle genera, specifically which species should be included within *Aquila* and which in *Hieraaetus*, Bill Clark also remarks on the English name of *Hieraaetus ayresii*. Because *H.*



Ayres's Hawk Eagle / Aigle d'Ayres *Hieraetus ayresii* (Nik Borrow)

*ayresii* presents few, if any, relevant characters in common with other hawk-eagles, specifically the Neotropical members of the genus *Spizaetus* and two other African raptors, both of which hunt inside forests, Clark recommends that *ayresii* be referred to simply as Ayres' Eagle. He also suggests that *Hieraetus* continues to be recognised as a genus apart from *Aquila*, with the following additional species as constituents: Wahlberg's Eagle *H. wahlbergi*, Booted Eagle *H. pennatus* (the type species of the genus), Little Eagle *H. morphnoides* and Pygmy Eagle *H. weiskei*; the last two-named species occur in the Australasian region.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 132, pp. 295–298

### Two odd gamebirds are related to New World not Old World species

The taxonomic affinities of two somewhat enigmatic African gamebirds have been investigated by Callan Cohen and others from the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute in Cape Town. Stone Partridge *Ptilopachus petrosus*, which inhabits rocky areas on the southern boundary of the Sahara, has usually been linked to some Asian forest species, but DNA-based research has recently found it to be closely related to

Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani* (sometimes now placed in *Ptilopachus*), which species occurs in remnant forests of lowland eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. Molecular markers overwhelmingly support this relationship and reveal that actually both are closer to New World quails, now usually placed in their own family Odontophoridae and not to any Old World gamebird species.

Source: Ibis 154, pp. 768–780

### Internet resources

#### **Bull. BOC freely available online**

Vol. 1 (1892) up to and including Vol. 127 (2007) of the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* are, or should shortly be, freely available on the Biodiversity Heritage Library website at [www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/46639](http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/46639). Many descriptions of African species and papers on African ornithology are published in this journal.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 132, p. 137

#### **Madagascar Conservation & Development**

The electronic, open-access journal *Madagascar Conservation & Development* released its latest issue (Vol. 7, no. 3) in December

## Announcement

### Phil Hockey 1956–2013

As this Bulletin went to press, news concerning the death of Phil Hockey was announced by the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute in South Africa. Born in England, Phil first came to the institute in 1976 and moved to South Africa permanently in 1979. Although most of his early research focused on coastal and estuarine bird ecology, Phil was involved in setting the guidelines for the first southern African bird atlas, and was lead author on the bird atlas of the Southwestern Cape. His focus on coastal waders also took him to many other destinations across the globe. As his career developed, his fields of interest broadened to include bird movement and migration, avian life history evolution and the ecology of rarity. By the end of the 1990s, Phil was one of the most experienced ornithologists in southern Africa, and a natural choice to lead the revision of *Roberts—Birds of Southern Africa*. He became the institute's Director in 2008 and he was awarded the Stevenson-Hamilton Medal by the Zoological Society of Southern Africa in the same year for contributions to the public awareness of science. We hope to publish a full obituary in the next Bulletin.

2012. This peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary journal is devoted to the swift dissemination of current original research in and on Madagascar and the western Indian Ocean islands. Among others, the latest issue contains papers on Madagascar's deforestation, the conservation of remaining forest fragments, and historical land cover changes in the highlands. All volumes are available free of charge at [www.journalmcd.com](http://www.journalmcd.com)

Source: Lucienne Wilmé in litt.  
December 2012



# Results of the seventh winter waterbird census in Libya, January–February 2011

Essam Bourass<sup>a</sup>, Nicola Baccetti<sup>b</sup>, Wajih Bashimani<sup>c</sup>, Ali Berbash<sup>d</sup>, Mohamed Bouzainen<sup>a</sup>, Adriano De Faveri<sup>b</sup>, Ashraf Galidan<sup>a</sup>, Al Mokhtar Saied<sup>b</sup>, Jaber Yahia<sup>a</sup> and Marco Zenatello<sup>b</sup>

**Résultats du septième dénombrement hivernal d'oiseaux d'eau en Libye, janvier–février 2011.** Les oiseaux d'eau et certains rapaces de 83 zones humides libyennes ont été dénombrés en janvier–février 2011 dans le cadre d'un programme de suivi commencé en 2005. Au total, 35.890 individus appartenant à 88 espèces ont été recensés. Des détails sont fournis pour 28 espèces pour lesquelles des différences significatives en nombre ou en répartition ont été notées par comparaison avec les données des six hivers précédents. La Mouette de Franklin *Leucophaeus pipixcan* est nouvelle pour la Libye, et la Sterne naine *Sternula albifrons* et l'Aigle criard *Aquila clanga* n'ont pas été observés pendant les inventaires hivernaux précédents. Des observations occasionnelles de certaines espèces non aquatiques sont également rapportées.

**Summary.** Waterbirds and selected raptor species were counted at 83 Libyan wetlands in January–February 2011 as part of a monitoring programme begun in 2005. In total, 35,890 individuals belonging to 88 species were recorded. Details are provided for 28 species which showed significant differences in numbers or distribution compared with the previous six winters. Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* was new for Libya, and Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* and Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* had not been recorded during previous Libyan midwinter censuses. Occasional observations of selected non-waterbirds are also reported.

An analysis of the first six waterbird censuses in Libya in the winters of 2005–10, part of the International Waterbird Census programme of Wetlands International, has recently been published (EGA–RAC/SPA Waterbird Census Team 2012). Field activities continued uninterrupted in the following seasons, despite the period of civil unrest and war. Here we present the main results of the seventh census, undertaken by the authors between 29 January and 13 February 2011. Major differences compared to the previous six years' data are highlighted; for the general aims, organisation and sponsorship of the initiative, see EGA–RAC/SPA Waterbird Census Team (2012).

## Site coverage and methods

The survey was particularly extensive in 2011, with 83 sites covered, including 22 new ones, i.e. marked as never visited in the national wetland list and map (EGA–RAC/SPA Waterbird Census Team 2012). From a 'traditional' western start point in the Farwah area, the survey of coastal sites reached Al Marj and Sabkhat al Kuz in the east. To also sample some inland sites, we elected to visit the Jufrah region and the Shati Valley (for the fourth and third time, respectively), because a number of promising wetlands had been detected using satellite images. A quick and incomplete visit to the Sarir desert was made by part of the

team, immediately prior to the coastal survey. The ten observers (including one trainee, M. Bouzainen) usually worked in separate teams in two Toyota LandCruisers, meeting each other repeatedly during each day or at sunset, depending on wetland size and location. Only waterbirds, seabirds, kingfishers and some raptor species that depend on wetlands were censused.

## Results

In total, 35,890 individuals belonging to 88 species of waterbirds and wetland-dependent raptors were recorded (Appendix 1). The overall number of species was higher than in all years between 2005 and 2010, whereas that of individuals was remarkably low, due to the small number of gulls in the Benghazi area. For 30 species, however, the 2011 total was higher than (or equal to) the maximum of all previous years, whereas it was below the minimum value for just four species. Details of the most noteworthy records are presented below. Unless otherwise stated, records in 2005–10 are from EGA–RAC/SPA Waterbird Census Team (2012).

### **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*

One at Tabilbah on 4 February. Second record in our seven-year database. First recorded in 2006 (one).

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

Confirmed as scarce and local in coastal areas, with just six at the Tawurgha complex (where none was found at Wadi al Azrak, a key site for the species in previous years) and four at Wadi Kaam dam. Small numbers (total: 73) possibly belonging to a locally resident population were present at eight wetlands in desert regions, especially in the Jufrah (cf. Cowan 1985 and Hering 2009 for other records in the Fezzan oases). Previous highest total was 42 in 2009.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

Two at Hijarah Lake, near Sabha, on 10 February. Third record in our database. Previously recorded in 2007 (one) and 2010 (two).

**Marbled Teal** *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

A record flock of 40 on 2 February at Ayn Tawurgha, the only site where it had been previously recorded in more than one winter. Previously observed in only four years, with one in 2007, 12 in 2008 and 2009 (EGA–RAC/SPA Waterbird Census Team 2012) and one on 27 April 2010 (J. Hering *in litt.* 2012).

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*

Only 13 in the entire coastal region, at three dams (with 11 at Wadi Kaam dam on 11 February), but 16, possibly belonging to a locally resident population, were found on 9–10 February at four wetlands in the desert regions of the Jufrah, Shati and at Hijarah Lake near Sabha, where breeding and wintering has been reported in the past (Cowan 1983). Previous annual totals: 10–36, wintering at 3–6 sites. Additionally, two males and one female were observed on 6 January 2010 at Al Marj, where, according to reliable information from local residents, the species also breeds (J. Hering *in litt.* 2012).

**Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus*

Thirty-seven individuals of various ages, foraging on 12 February off Janzour beach at Tripoli, represented the largest concentration recorded so far in the database; 1–2 were also observed at two sites in the southern Gulf of Sirt. Previous highest total was 12 in 2007.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Twenty-three in total, of which 15 were roosting in reeds at Buhayrat al Majdhub, the westernmost of the Al Maqarin karstic lakes, Benghazi, on 7 February, and five under the nets of a small fish farm near Hun on 8 February.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*

In total, 940 were counted at 15 sites, including 250 in full breeding plumage and on nests in the Bou Dzira reedbed heronry near Benghazi on 6 February (cf. Hering & Fuchs 2010). Close inspection of c.10 nests revealed that most of them were newly built or had been refurbished with green materials, but none had eggs. An evening count of the Bou Dzira heronry on the same day yielded 800 individuals (versus 547 counted during the day at all of the Benghazi wetlands and on the rubbish tip), raising the 2011 total to 1,193, the highest since 2005. Other heronries (e.g. at the tobacco factory in Tripoli), which might well have hosted substantial numbers, were not visited. A site visited for the first time, Misratah sewage farm, held 363 birds. Additional counts for sites / periods uncovered by our survey: ten at Sarir on 29 December 2010; 15 at the sewage farm and 30 at the camel market of Al Kufra on 31 December 2010; c.550 roosting at the sewage farm at Al Kufra on 3 January 2011; and 20 in irrigated fields of the Al Kufra government farm on 4 January 2011 (J. Hering *in litt.* 2012).

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

Beside a lower than average total (12) at wetlands, flocks were observed at two agricultural projects in the desert, 47 north-east of Sabha (at 27°23'32"N 15°02'21"E) on 10 February and 27 at Sarir on 29 January (Fig. 1), where c.120 had been present one month earlier (J. Hering *in litt.* 2012). Approximately 160 were also seen at Al Kufra government farm on 4 January 2011 (J. Hering *in litt.* 2012).

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus*

The total of 577 individuals was the lowest so far. This was due to a combination of locally unfavourable conditions at key sites such as Sabkhat Abu Kammash (which was totally dry), the Tawurgha complex (little water on the mudflats and only 60 flamingos, including





**Figure 1.** White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* on irrigated fields in the middle of the desert, Sarir, Libya, 29 January 2011 (Essam Bourass)

Cigognes blanches *Ciconia ciconia* dans des champs irrigués au milieu du désert, Sarir, Libye, 29 janvier 2011 (Essam Bourass)

37 at Al Hishah on 11 February) and Sabkhat Julyanah (lagoon drained; only three flamingos on 6 February). The best sites were Sabkhat al Kuz (214 on 7 February) and Sabkhat Urqub Jawwah, near Marsa al Burayqah airport, a site visited for the first time (108 on 4 February). Outside the surveyed sites and earlier in the same winter, five were recorded in the eastern desert at Lake Arashiyah and 22 at other lakes near Al Jaghbub on 27 December 2010 (J. Hering *in litt.* 2012).

#### **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*

An immature at Wadi Kaam dam on 11 February was the fifth record for Libya and the first in winter (Bundy 1976), as well as a new species for the 2005–10 winter dataset.

#### **Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

Total 67 (previous max. 12, in 2006). The higher number is largely due to as many as 63 at five sites in the desert, some of which had not been visited previously, e.g. Quttah-Barqin and Wanzarik, which held 41 and 13 individuals, respectively, on 9 February. See also Massa & Visentin (2006) and Hering (2009) for the presence of this species at Libyan oases.

#### **Common Crane** *Grus grus*

Total for all Libyan wetlands: 910 (the highest since 2005), with 390 at the roosts of Mellahat al Mesherrek and Umm al Ez, in the Tawurgha wetlands complex, on 2 February. Relatively large flocks were also observed at several Jufrah wetlands and in the surrounding desert (333

birds on 8 February) and at Karkurah (147 on 5 February), with lower totals west of Tripoli and in the southern Gulf of Sirt. Away from wetlands, 1,097 were found in irrigated fields at Sarir Government Farm, in the middle of the desert, on 29 January (*c.* 1,200 there on 29–30 December 2010: J. Hering *in litt.* 2012). Given the absence of wetlands suitable for roosting both in the Jufrah and at Sarir, these flocks possibly spent the night on open-desert sands.

#### **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Total 56, recorded, as usual, at the westernmost wetlands on the Libyan coast. Previous annual max. 41, in 2008.

#### **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

The overall total of 753 was more than twice the max. count in 2005–10. Previously identified key sites held comparable numbers to other years. The increase was mainly the product of counts at sites surveyed for the first time, including in the desert region (e.g. 66 at Quttah-Barqin lakes in the Shati Valley on 9 February) and by 121 individuals at Al Labadia near Al Marj, where unusually wet grasslands covered most of the former Al Ghariq Lake's surface (see also Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*).

#### **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii*

A single of this very scarce but regular winterer was found at the relatively western location of Sabkhat Qasr Ahmed on 2 February.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

Total 30 (previous max. 18, in 2007), 14 of which were at four wetlands in the desert (e.g. six at Hijarah Lake on 10 February), nine (the largest group) at Ajdabiyah sewage farm on 5 February and seven at two of the Nafusa dams on 13 February.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*, **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* and **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

All three species were recorded in unprecedented numbers (Northern Lapwing: 96; Common Snipe: 352; Green Sandpiper: 80) mainly due to large counts in the wet grasslands at Al Labadia near Al Marj (69 Northern Lapwings, 263 Common Snipe and 17 Green Sandpipers on 7 February), at wetlands in the Fezzan desert for the latter two species (e.g. 20 Common Snipe at Quttah-Barqin lakes on 9 February) and at Ajdabiyah sewage farm for Northern Lapwing (22 on 5 February). In the previous winter at least 1,000 Common Snipe, with 25 Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*, were present in wet grasslands near Al Marj on 6 January 2010 (J. Hering *in litt.* 2012).

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

Total 40 (previous max. 10, in 2007), 31 of which were at Sabkhat al Kuz on 7 February and seven at three wetlands in the desert regions of Jufrah and Shati.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Total 87, 35 of which were in the Sabha and Shati desert regions (previous max. 36, in 2008, when Sabha and the Shati Valley were also visited). As many as 34 were counted at Al Labadia, in north Cyrenaica, where the grasslands were unusually flooded in 2011.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Recorded in the desert (an adult at Hijarah Lake on 10 February) and sparsely along the coast. The relatively low annual total (7,610) is mainly due to only 3,800 being recorded at Sabkhat Qanfudhah, a wetland adjacent to a refuse tip (numbers in the remainder of the Benghazi wetlands were similar to those of previous years).



**Figure 2.** Adult Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan*, Zuwarah harbour, Libya, 1 February 2011 (Nicola Baccetti)

Mouette de Franklin *Leucophaeus pipixcan* adulte, port de Zuwarah, Libye, 1 février 2011 (Nicola Baccetti)

**Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

An adult in Zuwarah harbour on 1 February (Fig. 2). First record of this Nearctic gull for Libya. There are six records in Morocco (including one in December 2010) and one in Mauritania, but none in Tunisia and Algeria (Bergier *et al.* 2012, Isenmann *et al.* 2000, 2005, 2010). One observed at Luxor, Egypt, c.1 month later ([http://www.chn-france.org/upload\\_content/eorc\\_report\\_8.pdf](http://www.chn-france.org/upload_content/eorc_report_8.pdf)) was perhaps the same individual.

**Pallas's Gull** *Ichthyaelus ichthyaelus*

Total 14, at just three sites in the Gulf of Sirt (previous max. 8, in 2008). The tiny Sabkhat al Ghbeba, now almost totally dumped with solid waste, was confirmed as the most important Libyan site for this species, with six individuals on 3 February. Several adults were in full breeding plumage.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* and **Caspian Gull** *L. cachinnans*

Total for the two species combined: 945 (previous minimum 1,590). As with Black-headed Gull, small numbers at Sabkhat Qanfudhah were responsible for this low total. A careful scan of 350 *michahellis* / *cachinnans* in the Benghazi area (Sabkhat al Thama and Qanfudhah) on 6 February revealed all to be *cachinnans*. A further 195 individuals at Benghazi and Sabkhat al Kuz were attributed to *cachinnans*.

**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons*

One at Farwah Lagoon on 1 February. Second published midwinter record for Libya (the first being of one in Tripoli harbour on 22 December 1970: Brehme *et al.* 2003), but flocks of up to 50 were recorded in the Benghazi urban wetlands on





#### Clockwise from top left

**Figure 3.** Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Sabkhat Kasr Ahmed, Libya, 2 February 2011 (Adriano De Faveri)

Faucon émerillon *Falco columbarius*, Sabkhat Kasr Ahmed, Libye, 2 février 2011 (Adriano De Faveri)

**Figure 4.** Thick-billed Lark *Ramphocoris clotbey*, between Sabha and Jabal as Sawda, Libya, 10 February 2011 (Adriano De Faveri)

Alouette de Clotbey *Ramphocoris clotbey*, entre Sabha et Jabal as Sawda, Libye, 10 février 2011 (Adriano De Faveri)

**Figure 5.** Rock Martin / Hirondelle isabelline *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*, Barqin, Shati Valley, Libya, 9 February 2011 (Adriano De Faveri)

**Figure 6.** Isabelline Wheatear / Traquet isabelle *Oenanthe isabellina*, Sabkhat al Waset, Libya, 4 February 2011 (Adriano De Faveri)

27 December 2009–7 January 2010 (J. Hering *in litt.* 2012). Several winter records in Tunisia and one in Algeria; the species overwinters along the West African coast (Isenmann *et al.* 2000, 2005).

#### Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*

A higher total than in most winters, with 15 roosting at Farwah Lagoon, three at Sabkhat al Manqub (both on 1 February) and one at Sabkhat al Ghbeba in the Gulf of Sirt on 3 February.

#### Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

Total 128 (previous max. 77, in 2005). As many as 105 were at six sites in the Benghazi area, including at the almost drained Sabkhat Julyanah, with 33 there on 6 February. In the west, 17 were at Wadi Kaam dam on 11 February.

#### Non-waterbirds

Occasional sightings of other species, mainly near wetlands, included five **Black-shouldered Kites** *Elanus caeruleus* at the Mashrua, near Birak, on

10 February; single **Merlins** *Falco columbarius* at two sites in the Tawurgha complex on 2 February (Fig. 3); a gathering of 66 **Eurasian Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* at Ajdabiyah sewage farm on 5 February (*cf.* Brehme *et al.* 2009, Yahia & Hamza 2011); two **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* at Misratah sewage farm on 2 February; a **Thick-billed Lark** *Ramphocoris clotbey* between Sabha and Jabal as Sawda (at 27°55'N 15°28'E) on 10 February (Fig. 4); **Rock Martins** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* in the Shati and near Sabha (max. 40 at Quttah / Barqin on 9 February; Fig 5); >100 **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* at Sabkhat al Kuz and c.50 at Qaryunis near Benghazi on 6–7 February (smaller numbers at ten other sites); **Common House Martins** *Delichon urbicum* at 13 sites with max. 20 at Tabilbah; **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* at seven sites with max. 5 at Al Labadia on 7 February; three **Isabelline Wheatears** *Oenanthe isabellina* at Sabkhat al Waset on 4 February and singles at three sites in the Shati area (Fig. 6); a **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* at Sabkhat Zuwaytinah on 5 February; one or two **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* heard in palm trees at Wadi al Azrak on 2 February; two **Streaked Scrub Warblers** *Scotocerca inquieta* at Sabkhat al Washkah on 3 February; two **Spectacled Warblers** *Sylvia conspicillata* at Sabkhat al Kuz on 7 February; **Eurasian / African Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus*

*scirpaceus* / *baeticatus* in full song at 13 sites with the largest total (c.20) at Quttah-Barqin lakes on 9 February; a **Great Reed Warbler** *A. arundinaceus* singing at Wanzarik on 9 February; and two **Spotted Flycatchers** *Muscicapa striata* at Al Labadia on 7 February.

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Appendix 1. Waterbird totals recorded at Libyan wetlands in January–February 2011.

For White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* and Common Crane *Grus grus*, numbers obtained outside wetlands (see text) are also included.

Annexe 1. Totaux des oiseaux d'eau recensés dans les zones humides libyennes en janvier–février 2011.

Pour la Cigogne blanche *Ciconia ciconia* et la Grue cendrée *Grus grus*, les nombres obtenus en dehors des zones humides (voir texte) ont également été inclus.

Species		Totals
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	1
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	298
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	7
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	470
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	83
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	156
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	2
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	1,146
Marbled Teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	40
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	197
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	29



Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	19	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	4
Yelkouan Shearwater	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	5	Franklin's Gull	<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>	1
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	40	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	320
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	1,331	Audouin's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus audouinii</i>	279
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	1	Pallas's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i>	14
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	23	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	4
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	1,193	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	3,388
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	120	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	500
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	17	Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	445
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	198	gulls	<i>Laridae spp.</i>	22
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	3	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	1
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	86	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	87
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	37	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	314
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	145	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>	19
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	577	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	128
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	108	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	5
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	170	Total		35,890
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	267			
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	69			
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	2			
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	1			
Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	1			
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	2			
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	67			
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	403			
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	284			
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	2,007			
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	56			
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	753			
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	31			
Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	12			
Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	11			
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	30			
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	101			
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	873			
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	1			
Eurasian Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	11			
Eurasian Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	205			
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	161			
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	96			
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	100			
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	977			
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	3			
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	11			
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	2,800			
Small waders	<i>Calidris spp.</i>	394			
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	252			
Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyrtus minimus</i>	4			
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	352			
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	1			
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	17			
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	3			
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	678			
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	27			
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	80			
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	40			
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	40			
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	5			
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	87			
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	792			
Large waders	<i>Tringa sp.</i>	69			
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	69			
wader spp.		270			
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>	3,732			
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	7,610			

## Appendix 2. Coordinates of localities mentioned

### Annexe 2. Coordonnées des localités citées

Ajdabiyah sewage farm	30°41'41"N 20°15'32"E
Al Jaghbub	c.29°36'N 24°43'E
Al Kufra	c.24°12'N 23°16'E
Al Labadia	32°30'17"N 20°53'35"E
Al Maqarin karstic lakes	32°09'33"N 20°08'19"E
Al Marj	32°30'17"N 20°53'35"E
Ayn Tawurgha	32°00'50"N 15°06'26"E
Bou Dzira	32°10'06"N 20°07'55"E
Farwah Lagoon	33°05'17"N 11°45'37"E
Hijarah Lake	27°03'32"N 14°28'15"E
Hun	29°09'06"N 15°51'21"E
Jufrah	c.29°17'N 16°00'E
Lake Arashiyah	29°36'38"N 24°51'37"E
Mashrua	27°29'48"N 14°20'04"E
Mellahat al Meshherrek	31°58'00"N 15°08'07"E
Misratah sewage farm	32°19'35"N 15°08'43"E
Nafusa dams	c.32°07'N 12°48'E
Quttah-Barqin lakes	27°32'05"N 13°37'12"E
Sabha	c.27°01'N 14°26'E
Sabkhat Abu Kammash	33°05'02"N 11°35'38"E
Sabkhat al Ghbeba	31°12'59"N 16°22'22"E
Sabkhat al Kuz	32°26'27"N 20°26'00"E
Sabkhat al Manqub	32°54'34"N 12°07'25"E
Sabkhat al Thama	32°08'58"N 20°06'10"E
Sabkhat al Waset	30°43'05"N 18°15'05"E
Sabkhat al Washkah	31°25'56"N 15°35'05"E
Sabkhat Julyanah	32°05'25"N 20°03'34"E
Sabkhat Karkurah	31°24'04"N 20°03'18"E
Sabkhat Oanfudhah	32°00'01"N 19°59'19"E
Sabkhat Oaryunis	c.32°04'N 20°02'E
Sabkhat Qasr Ahmed	32°09'37"N 15°19'36"E
Sabkhat Tabilbah	30°27'37"N 19°42'58"E
Sabkhat Umm al Ez	31°59'18"N 15°12'04"E
Sabkhat Urqub Jawwah	30°22'47"N 19°32'20"E
Sabkhat Zuwaytinah	30°48'33"N 20°02'56"E
Sarir	c.27°39'N 22°30'E
Sarir Government Farm	27°44'27"N 22°04'15"E
Shati Valley	c.27°29'N 14°00'E
Tawurgha complex	c.32°00'N 15°06'E
Tripoli harbour	32°54'06"N 13°11'31"E
Wadi al Azrak	32°00'00"N 15°09'00"E
Wadi Kaam dam	32°23'48"N 14°19'45"E
Wanzarik	27°28'17"N 13°19'19"E
Zuwarah harbour	32°55'23"N 12°07'17"E

# Tanji River Bird Reserve, The Gambia—a globally important breeding site for Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*

Peter Cosgrove<sup>a</sup>, Paul Doyle<sup>a</sup>, Robin Cosgrove<sup>b</sup>, Roy Goff<sup>b</sup>, Jan Veen<sup>c</sup> and Lamin Manneh<sup>d</sup>

**La Réserve d'oiseaux de Tanji, Gambie—un site de nidification mondialement important pour la Sterne royale *Sterna maxima*.** La Réserve d'oiseaux de Tanji en Gambie abrite un nombre important d'oiseaux de mer nicheurs. Les auteurs présentent les résultats d'un suivi mensuel sur une période de huit ans ; des données plus anciennes sont également fournies. Pendant cette période les nombres de Sternes royales *Thalasseus maximus* et caspiennes *Hydroprogne caspia* ont fortement augmenté. Le nombre moyen de nids sur les huit ans est de 21.505 pour la Sterne royale et 1.688 pour la Sterne caspienne. Compte tenu de la période d'incubation moyenne de ces deux espèces et de nos inventaires mensuels, le nombre de nids donne une indication approximative du nombre de couples. La colonie de Sternes royales sur l'île Tanji est apparemment la deuxième plus grande en Afrique. La Réserve d'oiseaux de Tanji, qui abrite jusqu'à 19% de la population nicheuse de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, est ainsi un site de nidification mondialement important pour l'espèce.

**Summary.** Tanji River Bird Reserve in The Gambia holds important numbers of breeding seabirds. Monthly monitoring over an eight-year period is reported, together with earlier data. During this time substantial increases of Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* and Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* have been recorded. The mean number of nests over the eight years is 21,505 for Royal and 1,688 for Caspian Tern. Given the mean incubation period of these two species and our monthly survey visits, the number of nests provides an approximate index of the number of pairs, making the Royal Tern colony on Tanji Island the second largest in Africa. Tanji Bird Reserve is thus a globally important breeding site for the species, holding up to 19% of the West African breeding population.

The Bijol Islands and the mouth of the Tanji River are the most important sites for gulls and terns in The Gambia and constitute an Important Bird Area (BirdLife International 2011). Foremost amongst these are two islets that lie 2 km offshore (13°23'N 16°48'W) opposite the towns of Brufut and Tanji. In 1993 the Bijol Islands were gazetted and became known as the Tanji River (Karinti) Bird Reserve. The birds of the Bijol Islands were described by Barnett *et al.* (2001), Veen (2003) and Veen *et al.* (2003, 2004). Since then bird monitoring by the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM) has been regular and systematic counts of breeding seabirds have been undertaken annually, but surprisingly little has been published on the recent status of breeding seabirds there. This paper reports the systematic monthly counts of breeding seabirds over an eight-year period and focuses on the number of breeding Royal Terns *Thalasseus maximus*.

## Site description

The two tiny, low-lying and unstable islands are accumulations of sand, trapped by laterite

reefs. They were formerly lightly wooded, but disappeared in the 1960s and have gradually reformed since then. The larger island (6,665 m<sup>2</sup> in 2011) is now partially vegetated by the creeping halophytes *Ipomoea pes-caprae* and *Sesuvium portulacastrum* (Barnett *et al.* 2001). The islands are connected by a ridge of reef at low tide. The smaller island (850 m<sup>2</sup> in 2011) has the remains of a lighthouse but no vegetation. There is one tree c.6 m in height and two bushes 1–2 m tall on the larger island. The tern colony is sited on the exposed sand, mostly on the island's middle-southern edge, between the high-tide line and the edge of the vegetation, where the beach is more stabilised and sheltered from the Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 1). Other birds, e.g. gulls, breed amongst the vegetation in the centre in the island. The entire area is vulnerable to emersion and change in severe weather.

Regular breeding species in Tanji River Bird Reserve include Royal Tern, Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*, Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* and Slender-billed Gull *C. genei*. A few pairs of Long-tailed Cormorants *Microcarbo africanus* and Western





**Figure 1.** Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* and Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* colony, Tanji River Bird Reserve, Gambia, April 2012 (Donald Shields)

Colonie de Sternes royales *Thalasseus maximus* et de Sternes caspiennes *Hydroprogne caspia*, Réserve d'oiseaux de Tanji, Gambie, avril 2012 (Donald Shields)

Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* nest on the tree and bushes, and Pink-backed Pelicans *Pelecanus rufescens* formally bred but no longer do so.

### Survey methods

Between 2003–10, the Bijol Islands were systematically surveyed throughout the year. Breeding bird surveys were spaced approximately one calendar month apart (although this was not always possible due to adverse weather conditions), as the mean incubation period for the main breeding species is usually < 30 days (e.g. Grey-headed Gull 22–26 days; Slender-billed Gull 22–28 days; Caspian Tern 26–28 days; Royal Tern 30–31 days: Cramp & Simmons 1983). This permits monthly counts of nests to be cumulatively added, to provide an index of annual totals of breeding attempts and apparent numbers of pairs. It should be noted that annual counts were undertaken by different observers and although they followed a standard survey method, observer variability may have influenced the data collected.

It is recognised that annual breeding attempts may not be directly transposed into breeding pairs, as some pairs may be double-counted if they fail and then re-lay. It is also possible that some birds will lay eggs just after one survey visit and hatch before the next, and thus be missed. The opposite may also occur if birds lay eggs that are incubated longer than 30 days, hatching after the second visit and therefore double-counted. However, it is highly unlikely that this was an important source of error as the maximum incubation period of Royal Tern is 31 days and counts are spaced one month apart. Although the proportion of early and late hatchers in the population is unknown, it has been assumed for the purpose of population estimates that these are roughly equal and therefore cancel each other out. Future work is planned to test this assumption.

Surveys are conducted in two ways. Early in the season all nests containing eggs are located by walking and counting each nest and the number of eggs contained therein. If a nest has a chick and eggs then these are also counted. Nests

**Table 1.** Number of Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* nests recorded during monthly surveys on Bijol Islands, Gambia, 2003–10.

**Tableau 1.** Nombre de nids de la Sterne royale *Thalasseus maximus* recensés pendant les inventaires mensuels sur les îles Bijol, Gambie, 2003–10.

Year	March	April	May	June	July	August
2003	0	25	12,871	3,500*	0	0
2004	0	No data	15,375	0**	0	0
2005	0	10,500***	8,809	230	0	0
2006	0	22,855	565	371	0	0
2007	0	6,561	25,515	16	0	0
2008	0	5,372	12,096	0	0	0
2009	0	13,202	7,350	70	0	0
2010	0	10,000	16,356	397	0	0

\*Possibly repeat clutches following high tide.

\*\*High tide after May count washed away all nests.

\*\*\*Estimated count due to bad weather disrupting surveys.

**Table 2.** Number of Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* nests recorded during monthly surveys on Bijol Islands, Gambia, 2003–10.

**Tableau 2.** Nombre de nids de la Sterne caspienne *Hydroprogne caspia* recensés pendant les inventaires mensuels sur les îles Bijol, Gambie, 2003–10.

Year	January	February	March	April	May	June
2003	N/D*	N/D*	N/D*	72	26	31
2004	N/D*	251	199	N/D*	141	0
2005	N/D*	N/D*	300	N/D*	208	0
2006	0	208	737	14	0	0
2007	0	213	1,086	325	101	34
2008	308	1,232	427	308	101	0
2009	178	2,163	532	166	6	0
2010	442	1,323	1,485	503	382	0

N/D\* = No data collected.

containing only chicks or chicks already out of the nest are not counted. Each team consists of two people, one examining the nests and the other recording the details. This method is used for Caspian Terns, Grey-headed Gulls and Slender-billed Gulls, as these nests are at relatively low density and the spacing of nests permits easy and safe access to the colony.

Royal Terns are monitored differently due to the large numbers and density of the nests. A minimum of ten random 1 m<sup>2</sup> quadrat squares are established in the colony and all of the eggs within the quadrats are counted, with the mean number of nests per quadrat then calculated. The total area of the nesting colony is estimated in square

metres (using marker pegs and a tape measure) and multiplied by the mean number of nests per 1 m<sup>2</sup> in the quadrats to produce an estimate for the entire colony. Occasionally, poor weather during visits has hampered surveys.

### Survey results

Royal Terns breed on the Bijol Islands in April–June each year, with peak nesting activity in April–May (Table 1). Caspian Terns breed on the Bijol Islands during any of the first six months of the year, with peak activity usually in February–March (Table 2).

The annual number of Royal and Caspian Tern nests varies, but they have shown a general increase during the monitoring period (Fig. 2). The mean number of Royal Tern nests over the eight-year period is 21,505 and the mean number of Caspian Tern nests 1,688, although the latter is probably an underestimate because the 2003–05 data were based on partial counts.

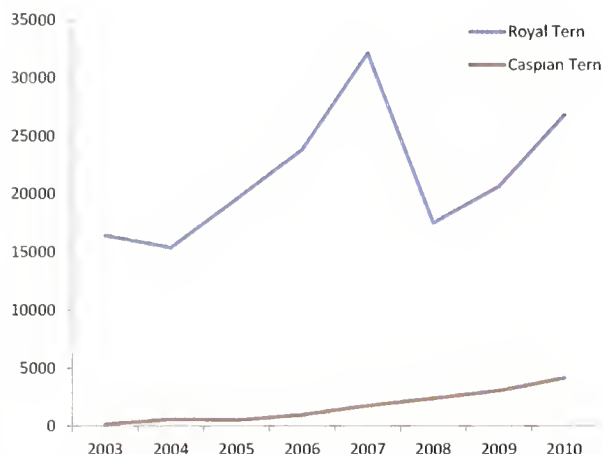
### Discussion

The numbers of breeding seabirds on the Bijol Islands have been occasionally reported since 2000, when at least 7,360 Royal Tern nests / pairs and 150 Caspian Tern nests / pairs were recorded (Barnett *et al.* 2001). In 2001, the Royal Tern colony had increased by >1,000 pairs to 8,500 pairs (L. Barnett & C. Emms *in Bull. ABC* 9: 9). There has been a substantial increase in the number of nests / pairs of both species since then, although it should be noted that Royal Tern numbers show large annual fluctuations (Fig. 2).

It is unclear to what extent regular boat patrols by the DPWM have contributed to this rise in nesting terns because egg collecting has occasionally occurred. Terns are known to switch colonies between years, but it is unlikely that birds from the nearest colony at Île aux Oiseaux in Senegal (13°37'36"N 16°38'21"W) have moved as there is no evidence of a decrease in numbers at this site (JV pers. obs.). Thus, increasing numbers probably result from successful breeding and / or birds relocating from other colonies further afield.

Royal Tern is not globally threatened (being categorised by the IUCN as Least Concern), but declines have been reported in several areas in the Americas (Gochfeld & Burger 1996). The species has a very large world range and occurs in the Americas and on the Atlantic coast of Africa,





**Figure 2.** Annual number of Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* and Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* nests on the Bijol Islands, Gambia, 2003–10 (note that data include some partial counts, when bad weather disrupted surveys).

Nombre annuel de nids de Sternes royales *Thalasseus maximus* et de Sternes caspiennes *Hydroprogne caspia* sur les îles Bijol, Gambie, 2003–10 (noter que les données comprennent quelques dénombrements partiels, quand le mauvais temps a perturbé les inventaires).

where it breeds from Mauritania (Banc d'Arguin) to Guinea. There are two subspecies, American *maximus* and West African *albididorsalis*. The world population is estimated to be 375,000 mature individuals; the West African subspecies is estimated at 225,000 individuals (Wetlands International 2006). In 2003–06 JV checked 14 West African colonies and numbers of breeding Royal Terns always exceeded 1,000 breeding pairs and in 11 cases more than 10,000 pairs (with those colonies on the Banc d'Arguin sited on different islands treated as one).

Historically the largest colony has been the 43,000 nests on Île aux Oiseaux in the Saloum Delta, Senegal, in 1999 (Veen *et al.* 2003). Taking the mean Bijol Islands annual count, the 21,505 Royal Tern pairs would not only be the second-largest colony in Africa, but with an assumed 43,010 mature individuals, Tanji Bird Reserve holds at least 19% of the West African Royal Tern population.

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# Surveys of Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris* in Sierra Leone

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**Inventaires du Choucador iris *Lamprotornis iris* en Sierra Leone.** En février–mars 2012, des inventaires du Choucador iris *Lamprotornis iris*, espèce « Insuffisamment connue », ont été réalisés sur trois zones au nord de la Sierra Leone : Bumbuna, le Lac Sonfon / Kabala, et la section Outamba du Parc National d'Outamba-Kilimi. L'espèce a été observée en nombre variable dans les trois zones (des comportements territoriaux ont été notés sur deux de celles-ci), suggérant que le Choucador iris est toujours assez bien répandu dans l'habitat approprié au sein de son aire de répartition dans le pays. Des recommandations sont données pour continuer les recherches sur l'espèce en Sierra Leone.

**Summary.** Surveys of the Data Deficient Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris* were conducted in three areas of northern Sierra Leone in February–March 2012. The species was observed in variable numbers in all three areas (with apparent territorial behaviour witnessed in two of them), suggesting that it remains reasonably widespread in suitable habitat within its known range in the country. Recommendations are given for follow-up work on the species in Sierra Leone.

The Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris*, sometimes placed in the monotypic genus *Coccycolius*, remains a poorly known West African endemic and is classified as Data Deficient by BirdLife International (2011a), because a lack of knowledge of its ecology, movements and population size currently hampers an accurate assessment of its conservation status. Recent records are confined to western and south-eastern Guinea, northern Sierra Leone and eastern Côte d'Ivoire (Borrow & Demey 2004), countries which are not always easily accessible, whilst the lightly timbered habitats it prefers lie apart from the remaining blocks of Upper Guinea rainforest where most recent birding effort and conservation work has been focused. The starling occurs in wooded and open savannas, and orchard bush, where it keeps to the tops of tall trees. It shuns closed forest but is occasionally found at the edge of gallery forest (Butchart 2007). Emerald Starling is a very attractive species with predominantly brilliant green plumage and purple patches around the eye and on the belly; it is unsurprising, therefore, that the bird trade may represent a threat to this species in some parts of its range (e.g. large numbers, thought to have originated from Guinea, were kept by bird traders in Monrovia, Liberia, in 1981–84; Craig & Feare 2009). In Sierra Leone, where travel has been easier in the last decade, the species has been recorded at several locations in the north of the country, with most recent observations by visiting foreign birders coming from track-edge habitats in

the Bumbuna area (e.g. Ryan 2006, Hornbuckle 2007; Birdquest tour reports 2008 and 2010, Rockjumper tour reports 2007, 2008 and 2009).

Very little is known about the ecology of the Emerald Starling. Nesting has not been described in the wild, although captive birds nest in tree holes (Feare & Craig 1998). A male collected with enlarged testes in February (Feare & Craig 1998) and a bird coming into breeding condition in Sierra Leone in March (Fry *et al.* 2000) are the only indications of the timing of breeding. These records suggest that nesting occurs towards the end of the dry season (November–April) but prior to the rainy season (May–October). The species is not always present at given locations, indicating at least local movements (Feare & Craig 1998). Emerald Starlings are generally encountered in groups of 4–10 birds but also in larger flocks of up to 20–50, whilst observations of captive birds suggest that pairs are territorial during nesting and the presence of helpers may indicate co-operative breeding (Feare & Craig 1998, Craig & Feare 2009). The species appears to have a rather catholic diet, feeding on the pulp and seeds of small fruit, including *Ficus* and *Harungana madagascariensis*, as well as on insects, including ants, which it takes from the ground (Feare & Craig 1998, Craig & Feare 2009).

The survey work reported here aimed to gather more data on the species. The team was invited by Dr Sama Monde, Executive Director of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), in collaboration with the Royal Society





**Figure 1.** Location of the three study areas in northern Sierra Leone and the estimated range of Emerald Starling *Lamprolornis iris*.

Localisation des trois zones d'étude au nord de la Sierra Leone et répartition estimée du Choucador iris *Lamprolornis iris*.

for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) International, to conduct systematic surveys of Emerald Starlings in areas of the country where it had been previously recorded. Over the period 26 February–10 March 2012 we surveyed three areas of northern Sierra Leone to obtain baseline data on the species' distribution, density and habitat use, as well as to train relevant personnel in bird-monitoring techniques. The three areas chosen were: 1) Bumbuna, including the roads to Makeni, Magburaka, Bendugu and Bassaia, 2) Lake Sonfon and environs Important Bird Area (IBA; see BirdLife 2011b) / Kabala, including the roads to Koinadugu and Falaba, and 3) the Outamba section of Outamba-Kilimi National Park (OKNP; see BirdLife 2011b), including the road to Kamakwie (see Fig. 1).

## Methods

The latter part of the dry season was chosen for survey work because many tracks are impassable during the wet season, whilst February–March is also believed to mark the start of the species' breeding season. Simple, repeatable distance sampling was conducted (Buckland *et al.* 1993), so that direct comparison of starling encounter rates could be made with future survey data. Survey points were selected using standardised random sampling by stopping every 1 km when driving along tracks / roads, or 1 km apart along footpaths where no driveable tracks were available (OKNP). Although habitats closer to tracks may be more degraded and disturbed than those further away, these were sampled as their ease of access permitted more points to be surveyed



**Figure 2.** Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris* habitat near Bumbuna, Sierra Leone, February 2012 (John Bowler)

Habitat du Choucador iris *Lamprotornis iris* près de Bumbuna, Sierra Leone, février 2012 (John Bowler)



**Figure 3.** Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris* habitat near Lake Sonfon, Sierra Leone, March 2012 (John Bowler)

Habitat du Choucador iris *Lamprotornis iris* près du Lac Sonfon, Sierra Leone, mars 2012 (John Bowler)



**Figure 4.** Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris* habitat along the Outamba entrance track, Sierra Leone, March 2012 (John Bowler)

Habitat du Choucador iris *Lamprotornis iris* le long de la piste d'entrée d'Outamba, Sierra Leone, mars 2012 (John Bowler)

in the limited time available, whilst visibility over the rather open habitats was generally very good. Where villages were encountered at survey points, we continued along the road / track until beyond the village edge. Numbers of all bird species present within a radius of 400 m calculated by eye of each survey point (an area of 0.5 km<sup>2</sup>) were recorded, in order to calculate comparable encounter rates, along with details of habitats present. Each point-count was 15 minutes long and was conducted between 07.00 and 11.30 hrs when birds were most active. The clock was stopped whenever Emerald Starlings

were located in order to permit more detailed observations on the birds and restarted again to complete a comparable 15-minute sample each time. Whenever Emerald Starlings were sighted, flock size, behaviour, food items and perch-choice were recorded. An attempt was made to cover all main habitat types at each sampling point for comparable bird count data, although Emerald Starlings were generally easily located by their distinctive calls. Counting was stopped after 15 minutes and the team moved to the next survey point. Up to nine survey points were covered per day. Attempts were made to trial survey work in the late afternoon, but bird activity was low at this time. Starling encounter rates in the afternoon would not, therefore, be directly comparable to those from the morning. Instead, more general monitoring was undertaken in the afternoon. During the survey, all observations were made using 8–10× binoculars and occasionally a 20–60× telescope. A GPS (Garmin Etrex) was trialled to obtain co-ordinates for each survey point but locating sufficient satellites to obtain an accurate fix was found to be very time-consuming. Maps and odometer readings were used to record locations of survey points.

## Results

### *Bumbuna*

A total of 42 survey points was completed over five days in the Bumbuna area (Table 1), all at 100–300 m a.s.l. Sixty-one Emerald Starlings were



**Table 1.** Numbers of Emerald Starlings *Lamprolornis iris* recorded during 15-minute point counts in northern Sierra Leone, 2012.

**Tableau 1.** Nombre de Choucadors iris *Lamprolornis iris* recensés pendant des comptages par point de 15 minutes au nord de la Sierra Leone, 2012.

Site	Date	Sub-site	Survey point								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Bumbuna</b> 11°45'W 08°55'N	26 Feb	Magburaka road	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	–
	27 Feb	Bendugu road	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–
	28 Feb	Makeni road	32	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0
	29 Feb	Bassaia road	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–
	1 Mar	Magburaka road south	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Lake Sonfon / Kabala</b> 11°30'W 09°30'N	2 Mar	Makakura to Kondembaia	0	0	0	58	0	20	4	18	3
	3 Mar	Kondembaia to Yara	15	14	4	0	10	3	2	2	0
	4 Mar	Kabala to Koinadugu	2	6	3	2	2	1	0	2	–
	5 Mar	Falaba road	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	–
<b>Outamba</b> 12°10'W 09°40'N	7 Mar	Kamakwie–Outamba	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–
	8 Mar	Outamba entrance track	0	3	2	0	2	0	1	–	–
	9 Mar	Outamba track east	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–
	10 Mar	Outamba track north-east	0	0	0	0	0	0	–	–	–

recorded at four (9.5%) of the survey points. All were observed in flocks of 6–32 birds; there were no obvious territorial pairs. Habitats included wooded savannah, taller more intact forest that was restricted to hillsides and gallery forest along rivers, interwoven with a patchwork of farmbrush and cultivation including small rice fields along streams and scattered patches of oil-palms, plus more open grassy savannahs often with tall palms. Many areas of wooded savannah showed recent evidence of burning and selective felling of trees for timber, along with more extensive removal of smaller trees for poles and firewood. In addition, large areas of wooded habitat have been lost in recent years to open-cast iron-ore mines and their associated tailings, roads, railways and mining camps, whilst dust put up by heavy lorries from the mines coats all vegetation within 20 m of the roads. We recorded 151 bird species in this region, including the Near Threatened Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*, as well as many Palearctic migrants that are currently undergoing population declines such as Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* and Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*.

### *Lake Sonfon / Kabala*

Thirty-four survey points were completed over four days in the Lake Sonfon / Kabala area at 200–500 m. A total of 178 Emerald Starlings was recorded at 22 (64.7%) of the survey points

(Table 1). Emerald Starlings were observed both in flocks (numbering up to 58 individuals) and as territorial pairs (at least seven noted). Habitats in the area included extensive areas of wooded savannah encompassing large patches of taller more intact forest, a patchwork of farmbrush and cultivation including small rice fields along streams and scattered patches of oil-palms. Many areas of wooded savannah showed recent evidence of burning, although this was mostly at herb-layer level to stimulate growth of fresh grass for cattle grazing. There was also evidence of localised selective felling of timber trees and removal of smaller trees for poles and firewood. Density of villages was higher along the Falaba road, particularly south of Dogoloya, and habitats were generally less intact here than towards Lake Sonfon. We recorded 159 species, including several not recorded at Bumbuna, such as Red-thighed Sparrowhawk *Accipiter erythropus*, Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis*, Black Wood-hoopoe *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*, Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster* and Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii*, as well as a lone singing Near Threatened Black-headed Rufous Warbler *Bathmocercus cerviniventris*.

### *Outamba*

Twenty-nine survey points were completed over four days in the Outamba area at 100–200 m. A total of eight Emerald Starlings was recorded



**Figure 5.** Emerald Starling / Choucador iris *Lamprolaima iris*, Bumbuna, Sierra Leone, February 2010 (Nik Borrow)

at four (13.8%) of the survey points (Table 1). Emerald Starlings were only observed in territorial pairs during the timed survey work, although larger groups of up to 20 were seen outside this period. Habitats in the area were rather varied. Outside the national park there were extensive areas of wooded savannah, occasional patches of disturbed gallery forest, a patchwork of farm bush and cultivation including small rice fields along streams, plus larger areas of more open grassy savannah closer to Kamakwie. Almost all of the wooded savannah showed recent signs of burning with many dead and dying trees. There was also much evidence of selective felling of timber trees and removal of smaller trees for poles and firewood. Within the park, habitats were much more intact, although there was still evidence of recent extensive burning. The wooded savannahs were generally denser with a more intact canopy, whilst the tall gallery forest along the Little Scarcies River appeared to be relatively intact. The extensive wooded savannahs and gallery forest at Outamba produced a total of 152 bird species, including White-crested Tiger Heron *Tigriornis leucolopha*, African

Finfoot *Podica senegalensis*, Standard-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx longipennis*, Yellow-casqued Hornbill and Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus*, as well as large numbers of Turati's Boubous *Laniarius turatii*, which were much easier to observe here than at Bumbuna.

### **All sites**

The overall encounter rate at all three sites was 9.4 Emerald Starlings per hour of survey effort ( $n = 26.25$  hours) with encounter rates of 5.8 at Bumbuna ( $n = 10.5$  hrs), 20.92 at Lake Sonfon/Kabala ( $n = 8.5$  hours) and 1.08 at Outamba ( $n = 7.25$  hours). Mean flock size was lower at Outamba (2.0) than at both Bumbuna (15.3) and Lake Sonfon / Kabala (4.8), since all birds encountered at Outamba appeared to be paired, although larger groups were also noted at this site but not during surveys. Flock size was highest at Bumbuna, where starlings were seen only in groups of six or more, and intermediate at Lake Sonfon, where they were seen in both territorial pairs and in larger groups. The presence of territorial pairs at Lake Sonfon and Outamba is suggestive of breeding activity at what is believed to be the start of the nesting season. All 30 survey points where Emerald Starlings were observed included areas of tall (10–25 m) savannah trees and 17 (57%) of these sites involved areas of grassy understory that had recently been burnt.

Emerald Starlings were mostly encountered in monospecific groups, but Violet-backed Starlings *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* were recorded commonly at all three study sites and were sometimes seen in the company of Emerald Starlings. At Bumbuna, 60 Violet-backed Starlings were recorded at ten survey points including groups of six and ten birds that associated with two of the four Emerald Starling flocks. At Lake Sonfon / Kabala, 61 Violet-backed Starlings were recorded at 14 survey points, including 11 where Emerald Starlings were also present, but the only observed interactions between the two species were of five Violet-backed Starlings among a flock of 58 Emerald Starlings on 2 March and three more in a flock of ten Emerald Starlings on 3 March. At Outamba, 43 Violet-backed Starlings were recorded at 11 survey points and Emerald Starlings were observed to actively chase Violet-backed Starlings at two survey points on 8 March. The association between the two species took the form of mixed flocking at



Bumbuna and Lake Sonfon / Kabala, whereas at Outamba, some of the interactions appeared to be more territorial in nature (see below).

The only other starling species recorded during the survey included two Lesser Blue-eared Starlings *Lamprotornis chloropterus* at one survey point along the Koinadugu road east of Kabala on 4 March, plus a single and a pair of this species in the Outamba section of OKNP on 10 March, none of which interacted with Emerald Starlings. A pair of Chestnut-bellied Starlings *L. pulcher* was observed along the entrance track to Outamba on 8 March but these did not interact with a pair of Emerald Starlings perched nearby. A group of five Bronze-tailed Glossy Starlings *L. chalcurus* was observed further west along the Outamba entrance track on 8 March and although these did not interact with Emerald Starlings during the survey work, the same group was subsequently observed in a mixed starling flock that included at least six Emerald Starlings and four Violet-backed Starlings.

### *Emerald Starling activity*

The majority of Emerald Starlings (60%) were encountered either perched high in mostly open trees of 10–25 m height or flying between perch sites, often calling as they did so. Although 21% of birds encountered were feeding on the ground, it is probable that the true proportion may have been higher, since birds on the ground rarely called and could have been overlooked. Birds were observed feeding on insects on recently burnt ground or, more rarely, on cultivated ground, and in trees on various berries and fruits including figs, although the latter was only observed directly in the Lake Sonfon area. Three birds were observed carrying large insects, one of which was eaten by the bird carrying it after perching on a high branch, indicating that food-carrying may not necessarily relate to pair-bonding or nesting. Aggressive behaviour was noted at Bumbuna where two Emerald Starlings were observed fighting within a flock and at Outamba where one bird was seen to repeatedly chase a pair of Violet-backed Starlings that appeared to be nesting in a tree hole, while another pair appeared to chase a pair of Violet-backed Starlings from a dead tree. Birds were only recorded singing in the Lake Sonfon area, including one bird that was perched high in a tree apparently guarding another bird

that was quietly feeding on figs below it. None of the Emerald Starlings observed in the field showed any obvious signs of juvenile plumage, presumably either because juveniles raised during the 2011 wet season (April–June) had already moulted into adult-type plumage by late February 2012, or because no juveniles were present in the areas visited.

### **Discussion**

From the survey results it would appear that Emerald Starling is still reasonably widespread in suitable habitat in northern Sierra Leone, although occurring in widely different densities according to location. The species appeared to be very localised in the Bumbuna area, with all but six being observed feeding, often with Violet-backed Starlings, in more open areas of wooded savannah with burnt ground and scattered tall trees within 5 km of Bumbuna town itself, which accords with other recent records of the species in the area (e.g. Hornbuckle 2007, Rockjumper tour reports 2007–09). Birds were absent from denser hill and gallery forest and the more open savannahs east along the Bendugu road, as well as from more disturbed wooded habitats south-east along the Bassaia road and in areas with denser oil-palm plantations south along the Makeni road. Clearly, Bumbuna remains a stronghold for the species. However, habitats in the surrounding area are fast being modified as a result of ongoing open-cast mining, and the species' future here must be considered uncertain. The Bumbuna to Makeni road, described as 'slow' as recently as 2006 (Hornbuckle 2007), is now a resurfaced dusty highway busy with lorries. A flock of c.100 Emerald Starlings was recorded in the Ferengbaia Hills south-east of Bumbuna within the last five years, in an area ear-marked for the tailings of adjacent open-cast mines (A. Okoni-Williams *in litt.* 2012). Other reports from the area include several large flocks along the Makeni–Magburaka road in early February 2012 (CSSL pers. comm.) although we failed to locate any on 25 February and 1 March 2012.

Emerald Starlings were both most numerous and most widespread in the Lake Sonfon / Kabala area, with the largest numbers along the Makakura–Yara road within the Lake Sonfon and environs IBA. This area of rolling hills appeared to have the best mix of habitats for

the species, comprising large areas of relatively intact wooded savannah currently untouched by large-scale mining activity, with scattered village clearings and cultivated patches with frequent tall trees. Flocks of Emerald Starlings, occasionally mixed with Violet-backed Starlings, were recorded in wooded savannah on the edge of small-scale cultivation, feeding on figs and other fruits, as well as insects, in areas where the grass understorey had been recently burnt by Fula cattle herders to encourage new growth. Pairs were also observed behaving in a territorial manner, including males in sub-song and mate guarding, which was suggestive of potential breeding at the start of the presumed nesting season. Wilkinson (2000) states that Emerald Starlings are loosely colonial breeders, so it may be that they also flock during the nesting season. Starlings were also widespread east of Kabala along the Koinadugu road and have recently been observed at Sinikoro, a further 30 km south-east of Koinadugu in the foothills of the Loma Mountains (R. Demey *in litt.* 2012). The species was found at lower density in more disturbed wooded savannah north of Kabala along the Falaba road, whilst at least three individuals were observed at the edge of cultivation along the Kabala–Makeni road, in the wooded hills south-west of Fadugu on 1 and 6 March 2012.

Emerald Starlings were very local in the Outamba area. Small numbers were restricted to open wooded savannah with recently burnt grassy understorey along the park's entrance track. These birds appeared to be engaged in territorial activity and spent much time chasing apparently nesting pairs of Violet-backed Starlings. We failed to locate Emerald Starlings at any of the 14 survey points within the more intact habitats in the main section of the park, where the species was apparently replaced by Lesser Blue-eared Starling. Another suitable patch of habitat holding Emerald Starlings apparently exists much further east into the park (Outamba forest guards pers. comm.). The separate Kilimi section of OKNP lies 30 km west of Outamba and apparently supports the extensive open wooded savannah habitat preferred by Emerald Starlings, but was unreachable due to a shortage of petrol north of Makeni. Recent reports of Emerald Starlings in significant numbers in OKNP (e.g. Forget & Langhendries 2010) may reflect their apparent abundance along the Outamba entrance track or may refer instead

to the Kilimi section of the park. Unfortunately, the Outamba section of OKNP has recently been invaded by hundreds of illegal gold miners, who have set fire to some areas and forced some of the park's big game to move into adjacent agricultural areas, creating further problems for villagers and forest guards there.

Using these and previous observations, it is possible to estimate the current range of Emerald Starling in Sierra Leone (Fig. 1). The southernmost records are from just north of Magburaka and south-east of Makeni, whilst the north-westernmost records are from the Kilimi section of ONKP and the north-easternmost from the foothills of the Loma Mountains near Sinikoro, with Bumbuna, Kabala and the Lake Sonfon IBA lying within the core of this range. It seems probable that the species is patchily present, at least seasonally, in suitable habitat throughout this area north to Falaba and its range is potentially contiguous with populations in similar habitats north of the border in Guinea, where Emerald Starling is known from Balandougou IBA at 12°35'W 10°27'N (BirdLife International 2011b). The species faces threats from anthropomorphic habitat change throughout this area, particularly large-scale clearance of wooded savannah for open-cast mining and agriculture, but its ability to survive and even thrive in patchy wooded savannah interspersed with cultivation and farmbrush gives some hope for its long-term survival.

## Recommendations

At the end of our survey we hosted a seminar on our findings through the STEWARD organisation in Freetown, attended by representatives from local NGOs, including CSSL, and the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture. Key recommendations are:

- Upgrade Lake Sonfon and environs IBA to National Park status to prevent the development of large-scale mining activity there.
- Remove illegal gold miners from the Outamba section of OKNP before they create more extensive damage, and conduct a survey of the Kilimi section for Emerald Starlings.
- Repeat surveys of the areas surveyed in February–March 2012 to investigate between-year and seasonal differences in Emerald Starling numbers.



- Conduct surveys of other areas of similar habitat to more completely determine Emerald Starling distribution.
- Use the results from this and follow-up surveys to produce an estimate of the Emerald Starling population in Sierra Leone by 2015.
- Monitor bird markets in Freetown and elsewhere in Sierra Leone to check if the species is being caught for the bird trade.

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# *Schotia brachypetala*—a nectar cornucopia for birds

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***Schotia brachypetala*—corne d'abondance de nectar pour les oiseaux.** *Schotia brachypetala* fleurit au printemps et en début d'été et produit copieusement du nectar qui attire de nombreux nectarivores aviens spécialistes et opportunistes. Vingt-huit espèces d'oiseaux ont été observées en septembre–octobre 2011 se nourrissant du nectar de deux arbres en fleur, l'un dans la province de Limpopo et l'autre dans la province de Gauteng, en Afrique du Sud. Grâce à nos observations, augmentées par une recherche de la littérature et des données complémentaires d'autres observateurs, on dénombre maintenant 54 espèces d'oiseaux qui s'alimentent du nectar de *S. brachypetala*. Cette note souligne une fois de plus la diversité des nectarivores généralistes et opportunistes en Afrique australe.

**Summary.** *Schotia brachypetala* flowers in spring and early summer and produces copious nectar that attracts numerous specialist and opportunistic nectar-feeding bird species. Twenty-eight bird species were observed feeding on the nectar of two flowering trees, one in Limpopo province and another in Gauteng province, both in South Africa, during September–October 2011. Together with our observations, a literature search and additional reports from other observers brings the total number of bird species recorded feeding on *S. brachypetala* to 54 species. This note further emphasises the diversity of generalist or opportunistic nectarivores in southern Africa.

*Schotia brachypetala* Sond. (family Fabaceae or Leguminosae) is a widespread tree species in southern African savannas. The common name, Weeping Boerbean, most aptly describes the tree that produces copious amounts of nectar that even drips out of the flowers. The flowering period occurs during spring and in any individual tree is generally short (c.2 weeks) (van Wyk & van Wyk 1997, Boon 2010). This appears to be slightly different to *S. afra* var. *afra* which occurs in south-eastern South Africa; it flowers mainly during July–October, although flowers have been collected in every other month of the year (van Wyk & van Wyk 1997; B. van Wyk pers. comm.). These two flowering strategies may benefit birds in different ways; the longer flowering period of *S. afra* may provide smaller amounts of nectar to birds over a longer period (Skead 1967) whilst an abundance of nectar in *S. brachypetala* over a shorter period may supply birds with food following a lean winter period.

The nectar of *S. brachypetala* is described in many field guides as an important food for birds, particularly sunbirds (e.g. van Wyk & van Wyk 1997). However, reports describing specific feeding accounts are few or are hidden in 'grey literature'. Skead (1967) reported specifically on the importance of *Schotia* spp. nectar for sunbirds and Palmer & Pitman (1972) reported broadly on the importance of four *Schotia* species for animals. Here we report nectar feeding by birds at two

*S. brachypetala* trees in South Africa, and collate additional records of feeding on this species, and on other *Schotia* spp. as reported by Skead (1967).

During 23–26 September 2011 a single flowering tree at Wits Rural Facility (WRF), Limpopo province (24°33'11"S 31°05'48"E), was observed opportunistically during daylight hours for nectar-feeding visitors. During the observation period the tree was covered profusely in mature flowers and nectar literally dripped from the tree. We also made additional opportunistic observations at a *S. brachypetala* tree flowering at the University of the Witwatersrand campus in central Johannesburg, Gauteng province (26°11'27"S 28°01'56"E), during 27 September–18 October 2011.

Overall we recorded 28 bird species feeding on nectar, 20 of which were photographed (Table 1). An additional five species were recorded in the tree at WRF, but not seen directly probing for nectar. Three of these species, Green Woodhoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*, Southern Boubou *Laniarius ferrugineus* and Southern Black Tit *Parus niger* are known to be nectar feeders but were not recorded feeding on *S. brachypetala*, whilst two species, Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* and Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor*, were seen in the tree during the flowering period but not seen (or previously recorded) feeding on nectar. In addition we also observed several Tree Squirrels *Paraxerus cepapi* feeding on nectar and







**Figure 1.** Some species feeding on nectar of *Schotia brachypetala* (a) Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus*; (b) Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*; (c) Terrestrial Brownbul *Phyllastrephus terrestris*; (d) Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii*; (e) Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*; (f) Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyanus*; (g) Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*; (h) Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius*; (i) Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*; (j) Thick-billed Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*; (k) Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*; (l) Tree Squirrel *Paraxerus cepapi* (K. Yoganand)

Quelques espèces s'alimentant du nectar de *Schotia brachypetala* (a) Barbion à croupion jaune *Pogoniulus bilineatus*; (b) Loriot masqué *Oriolus larvatus*; (c) Bulbul jaboteur *Phyllastrephus terrestris*; (d) Cratérope fléché *Turdoides jardineii*; (e) Prinia modeste *Prinia subflava*; (f) Merle kurrichane *Turdus libonyanus*; (g) Souimanga à collier *Hedydipna collaris*; (h) Tisserin intermédiaire *Ploceus intermedius*; (i) Tisserin écarlate *Anaplectes rubriceps*; (j) Amblyospize à front blanc *Amblyospiza albifrons*; (k) Serin du Mozambique *Serinus mozambicus*; (l) Écureuil des bois *Paraxerus cepapi* (K. Yoganand)





**Table 1.** Bird species recorded feeding on nectar in flowers of *Schotia brachypetala*.  
**Tableau 1.** Espèces d'oiseaux observées s'alimentant de nectar des fleurs de *Schotia brachypetala*. L'ordre et la taxonomie suivent Hockey et al. (2005).

Sources: 1 = Skead (1967) attributes some records to *S. afra* and *Schotia* in general; 2 = Stidolph (1969); 3 = Palmer & Pitman (1972); 4 = Berruti (1989); 5 = Johnson (1989); 6 = Dinkelmann & Dinkelmann (1998); 7 = Hoddinot (1998); 8 = A. Craig pers. comm.; 9 = G. Nichols pers. comm.; 10 = M. Kriek pers. comm.; 11 = S. Boardman pers. comm.; WRF = observed feeding on *S. brachypetala* nectar during this study at Wits Rural Facility (Limpopo province); Jhb = birds observed feeding on *S. brachypetala* nectar at University of the Witwatersrand campus in Johannesburg (Gauteng province). Sequence and taxonomy follow Hockey et al. (2005).

Species	Source
<b>Lybiidae</b>	
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i>	WRF
Red-fronted Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus pusillus</i>	5
Black-collared Barbet <i>Lybius torquatus</i>	5, WRF
Crested Barbet <i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>	11
<b>Phoeniculidae</b>	
Green Wood-hoopoe <i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	9
<b>Rhinopomastidae</b>	
Common Scimitarbill <i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i>	WRF
<b>Coliidae</b>	
Speckled Mousebird <i>Colius striatus</i>	WRF
Red-faced Mousebird <i>Urocolius indicus</i>	8
<b>Psittacidae</b>	
Brown-headed Parrot <i>Poicephalus cryptoxanthus</i>	6, 7
<b>Oriolidae</b>	
Black-headed Oriole <i>Oriolus larvatus</i>	8, 11, WRF
<b>Dicruridae</b>	
Fork-tailed Drongo <i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	WRF
<b>Malaconotidae</b>	
Southern Boubou <i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>	11
<b>Pycnonotidae</b>	
Dark-capped Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>	5, 11, WRF
Sombre Greenbul <i>Andropadus importunus</i>	5, WRF
Terrestrial Brownbul <i>Phyllastrephus terrestris</i>	WRF
<b>Sylviidae</b>	
Long-billed Crombec <i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>	WRF
Arrow-marked Babbler <i>Turdoides jardineii</i>	WRF
<b>Zosteropidae</b>	
African Yellow White-eye <i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	9
Cape White-eye <i>Zosterops capensis</i>	2, 5, 8, WRF, Jhb
<b>Cisticolidae</b>	
Tawny-flanked Prinia <i>Prinia subflava</i>	5, WRF

Yellow-breasted Apalis <i>Apalis flavida</i>	5, 6, WRF
<b>Muscicapidae</b>	
Kurrichane Thrush <i>Turdus libyanus</i>	5, WRF
Karoo Thrush <i>Turdus smithi</i>	Jhb
African Dusky Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa adusta</i>	5
Cape Robin Chat <i>Cossypha caffra</i>	5
<b>Sturnidae</b>	
Red-winged Starling <i>Onychognathus morio</i>	6, Jhb
Black-bellied Starling <i>Lamprolornis corruscus</i>	5, 6
Cape Glossy Starling <i>Lamprolornis nitens</i>	5, 6, WRF
Burchell's Starling <i>Lamprolornis australis</i>	3
Wattled Starling <i>Creatophora cinerea</i>	6
Common Myna <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	10
<b>Nectariniidae<sup>a</sup></b>	
Eastern Olive Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	9
Grey Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra veroxii</i>	1, 2, 6
Amethyst Sunbird <i>Chalcomitra amethystina</i>	1, 5, 8
Scarlet-chested Sunbird <i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>	1, 2, 5, 6, 11
Collared Sunbird <i>Hedydipna collaris</i>	2, 5, 6, WRF
Southern Double-collared Sunbird <i>Cinnyris chalybeus</i>	1
Greater Double-collared Sunbird <i>Cinnyris afer</i>	1
Neergaard's Sunbird <i>Cinnyris neergaardi</i>	2, 4
White-bellied Sunbird <i>Cinnyris talatala</i>	1, 2, 5, 6, WRF
Marico Sunbird <i>Cinnyris mariquensis</i>	1, 5, 6, 11
Purple-banded Sunbird <i>Cinnyris bifasciatus</i>	2, 5, 6, 11
<b>Ploceidae</b>	
Lesser Masked Weaver <i>Ploceus intermedius</i>	5, WRF
Spectacled Weaver <i>Ploceus ocularis</i>	5, WRF
Cape Weaver <i>Ploceus capensis</i>	5, 8
Southern Masked Weaver <i>Ploceus velatus</i>	Jhb
Village Weaver <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	5, WRF
Red-headed Weaver <i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>	WRF
Thick-billed Weaver <i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>	WRF
<b>Estrildidae</b>	
Red-backed Mannikin <i>Spermestes bicolor</i>	2
<b>Passeridae</b>	
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow <i>Passer diffusus</i>	WRF
<b>Fringillidae</b>	
Forest Canary <i>Serinus scotops</i>	11
Yellow-fronted Canary <i>Serinus mozambicus</i>	WRF
Streaky-headed Seedeater <i>Serinus gularis</i>	11

<sup>a</sup> The number of sunbirds feeding on *S. brachypetala* nectar may be under-represented but this summary reviews only the published literature of birds specifically feeding on nectar of *S. brachypetala*.

Vervet Monkeys *Chlorocebus pygerythrus* nearby. Vervet Monkeys and Chacma Baboons *Papio hamadryas ursinus* have been recorded feeding on *Aloe marlothii* nectar, and South African Large Spotted Genet *Genetta tigrina* on *Maranthes polyandra*; so *S. brachypetala*, like other nectar-abundant plants, may be an important food and / or water source for other mammal species (Lack 1977, 1978, Symes *et al.* 2008, Symes 2010, Symes *et al.* 2011).

A literature search for the occurrence of nectar feeding by birds, observations from other competent birders, and our own observations brings the total number of bird species recorded feeding on *S. brachypetala* to 54. However, this list is by no means exhaustive, and we suggest, given further investigation, that many more species will be added to it. Some of the species on the list may be questionable, especially those cited by only one reference. However, given that they may either (1) belong in a family where many other members are recorded nectar feeders (on nectar of *S. brachypetala* or other species, e.g. African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta*), or (2) they are recorded feeding on the nectar of other plant species, e.g. Red-backed Mannikin *Spermestes bicolor* feeding on *Callistemon viminalis* nectar (G. Nichols pers. obs.), we have retained them in the list.

Only 11 of the observed species are specialist nectar feeders, i.e. sunbirds, suggesting that generalist or opportunistic nectarivores (which comprise >80% of these nectar-feeding species) may also be important pollinators for *S. brachypetala*. The presence of six species of starlings, including Burchell's Starling *Lamprolornis australis* which has been recorded feeding on flowers (Palmer & Pitman 1972) suggests that the nectar is fructose dominated (members of two lineages, the Sturnidae–Mimidae–Turdidae–Muscicapidae and Furnariidae, appear to lack the enzyme sucrase and therefore cannot assimilate sucrose: Martínez del Río & Stevens 1989, Martínez del Río *et al.* 1992, Lotz & Schondube 2006). Because the flowers are relatively exposed, and nectar that does not drip out can potentially evaporate, measurements of nectar volume and concentration were expected to vary. In samples collected early in the morning at a tree in the University of the Witwatersrand campus, Johannesburg, in a position where it is seldom artificially watered, nectar concentration

in flowers with large volumes of nectar (volume >150 µl, *n* = 3) measured 15–19% w/w (mass sugar / mass water %; measured with a hand-held refractometer; Bellingham & Stanley, Tunbridge Wells, UK). Nicolson (2002) confirmed that the nectar contains 0% sucrose and that mean nectar concentration was  $11.3 \pm 2.5\%$  (mean  $\pm$  SD, *n* = 21). This compares favourably with the hypothesis that plants producing nectars of high volume (40–100 µl/flower) and low concentration (8–12% w/w) attract generalist bird pollinators (Johnson & Nicolson 2008). In flowers where nectar may have become evaporated or reabsorbed, volumes were much lower (<100 µl, *n* = 3) and concentrations higher (37% w/w).

This article furthermore highlights the diversity of opportunistic nectar-feeding bird species in southern Africa. *Aloe marlothii* has previously been shown to be an important food source for a diverse range of bird species (Symes 2010, Symes *et al.* 2011). In addition, several trees with red flowers, e.g. *Bombax*, *Erythrina*, *Parkia*, similarly attract large numbers of birds elsewhere in Africa (Pettet 1977, Jacot Guillarmod *et al.* 1979; F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2012). Equally the nectar of flowering *S. brachypetala* and the attraction it has for many species of birds may suggest that it is an important food and / or water source for numerous species; these interactions warrant further attention from researchers.

## Acknowledgements

Greg Davies (Ditsong National Museum of Natural History, Pretoria) is thanked for providing summarised references and access to his annotated ornithological index (Davies 2010). Adrian Craig, Geoff Nichols, Mostert Kriek and Sheila Boardman reported additional observations of birds feeding on *S. brachypetala* nectar. Braam van Wyk (University of Pretoria), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and an anonymous reviewer made comments that improved the paper.

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# Counting *Macrodipteryx* nightjars for monitoring purposes

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**Dénombrer des engoulevents *Macrodipteryx* pour leur 'monitoring'.** De 2004 à 2012 nous avons dénombré les engoulevents sur une piste d'atterrissage et les routes avoisinantes dans le Parc National de Murchison Falls, Ouganda. Les dénombrements ont été réalisés à partir d'un véhicule roulant à faible vitesse, pendant une courte période de 10–30 minutes après le coucher du soleil, quand les engoulevents étaient les plus nombreux. Les oiseaux étaient détectés principalement à l'aide des phares du véhicule. Les totaux des Engoulevents à balanciers *Macrodipteryx longipennis* et porte-étendard *M. vexillarius* varient considérablement selon les années mais n'affichent pas de tendance générale. Nous recommandons cette méthode de monitoring comme étant facile à utiliser sur des sites abritant un nombre relativement élevé d'engoulevents.

**Summary.** We counted nightjars on a grass airstrip and nearby roads in Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda, between 2004 and 2012. Counts were made from a slow-moving vehicle, mainly using the headlights to spot birds, and spanned the times of highest numbers, which were limited to a brief period 10–30 minutes after sunset. Numbers of Standard-winged *Macrodipteryx longipennis* and Pennant-winged Nightjars *M. vexillarius* varied considerably between years but showed no overall trend. We recommend this method of monitoring as being easy to use at sites harbouring relatively large numbers of nightjars.

Both Standard-winged *Macrodipteryx longipennis* and Pennant-winged Nightjars *M. vexillarius* are spectacular and, at least until recently, often common species over much of tropical Africa (Fry *et al.* 1988). On their breeding grounds, males often form leks, and the birds frequently migrate in flocks (Cheke & Walsh 2000, Jackson 2004). Nightjars in general also have the habit of resting on roads and other open areas, especially at dawn and dusk, which can make them easy to count (Fry *et al.* 1988, Cleere & Nurney 1998, Holyoak 2001, Jackson 2003). This presumably gives them a clear view of the sky, compared to more vegetated areas (Cleere & Nurney 1998, Jackson 2003, 2004). There appear to be few cases of *Macrodipteryx* nightjar counts being made along roads, but Fry *et al.* (1988) quote two, 108 males on 30 km of road in Zambia, and 45 on 10 km of road in Chad—both averaging more than 3.5 males per km (*cf.* below). Jackson (2002), in a major review of nightjar mortality, particularly on roads, also cites a few counts, although none of live birds in Uganda.

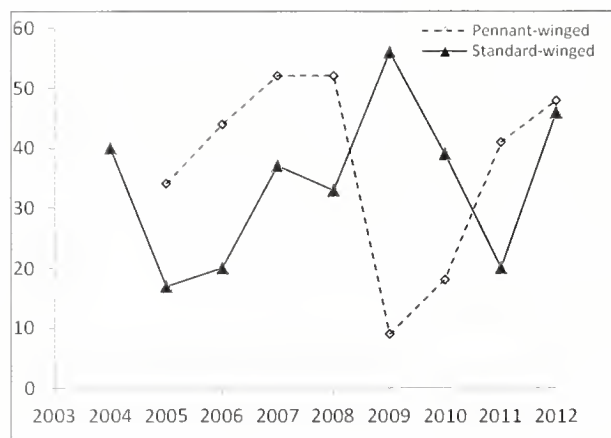
We made systematic counts of both Standard-winged and Pennant-winged Nightjars in Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda, between 2004 and 2012. Both species have been the subject of several studies in various countries (Cleere & Nurney 1998, Cheke & Walsh 2000, Holyoak 2001). Although not Red-Listed, they are at risk, partially because of their habit of

perching on roads at night, where they are often killed by vehicles. Jackson (2002) lists Standard-winged as at high risk of being killed on roads, and Pennant-winged as very high. Interestingly, despite covering c.1,000 km of road counts in Murchison Falls National Park, during which over 500 live nightjars were seen, we recorded no road-kills. Traffic is not heavy at night, but some vehicles do use these roads after dark. It would be positive to think that the birds are learning, although that seems unlikely. We also have records showing that Standard-winged Nightjar occurs widely across rural areas of Uganda, where night-driving is rare. It therefore seems likely that, at least nationally, road-kills are a minor problem.

So far as is known, both species are migrants in Uganda, although there are historical records of Standard-winged Nightjar breeding (Carswell *et al.* 2005); the same authors also report a probable decline of that species, for which there are fewer recent records than for Pennant-winged. Our counts of Standard-winged Nightjar were around the end of January in each year, and of Pennant-winged in late July, when they are probably on passage to breeding grounds further south.

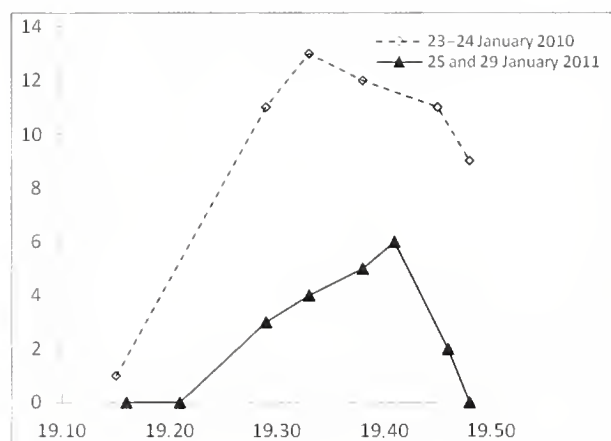
Both species are particularly active for a short period at dusk (see below), after which they commonly perch on roads or tracks. We made counts in Murchison Falls National Park, in northern Uganda: on an airstrip with a compacted soil surface, similar to park roads, c.8 km south of





**Figure 1.** Counts of the two *Macrodipteryx* nightjar species at Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda, obtained by combining maximum counts from each section.

Dénombrements des deux espèces d'engoulevents *Macrodipteryx* au Parc National de Murchison Falls, Ouganda, obtenus en combinant les totaux maximaux de chaque section.



**Figure 2.** Results of successive counts on the Murchison Falls National Park airstrip, Uganda, for Standard-winged Nightjars *Macrodipteryx longipennis*. Sunset was at about 19.08 hrs. The vertical axis shows the numbers of males recorded during each count.

Résultats des dénombrements successifs sur la piste d'atterrissage du Parc National de Murchison Falls, Ouganda, pour l'Engoulevent à balanciers *Macrodipteryx longipennis*. Le soleil se couchait à environ 19.08 hrs. L'axe vertical montre le nombre de mâles observés pendant chaque dénombrement.

Paraa, and along the main park roads from the airstrip to Paraa and from near Sambiya Lodge to Paraa, a distance of 23 km. On the airstrip, which is c.2,000 m long and 30 m wide, our procedure was to drive from one end to the other, zigzagging to obtain the widest coverage, and then

back, covering the complete length 4–6 times. Some birds were seen in flight, whilst others were observed on the ground; the latter were harder to detect as they sat tight unless approached very closely.

The first count was made as it was beginning to get dark, and the last after the peak numbers had been seen (see below). Males were frequently and conspicuously displaying, sometimes attracting females to join them. Counts on the main stretch of road, Sambiya to Paraa, were made so that the mid-point of the route was passed at about the same time that peak numbers had been recorded on the airstrip, usually the previous day. For airstrip counts, two observers stood at the back of a pick-up truck or on the roof of a Land-Rover. Until it became too dark, towards the end of the counting period, birds were typically seen silhouetted against the sky, whilst others were picked up by the vehicle headlights whilst on the ground. In most years, the airstrip was counted twice or three times, but Sambiya to Paraa was usually counted only once. Since the airstrip was also counted several times each day, we took the highest of all counts for the purposes of this communication. Other species of nightjar were also recorded, but their numbers were too low to permit analysis.

The results of these counts are presented in Fig. 1, which shows the combined totals of the various routes used. Both species increased between 2005 and 2008, but then varied widely. Obviously, one cannot deduce too much from these relatively small samples from just one area, but if others were to use similar methods elsewhere, a broader and more reliable picture might emerge, and in any case we recommend that these counts be continued indefinitely in Uganda.

It is typical of nightjars that they vocalise mainly at dawn and dusk, but also during the night when moonlit (Fry *et al.* 1988). The activity patterns at the airstrip followed a similar pattern, with most departing after a short time. Thus counts must be made during the brief period

#### Legend to figures opposite

**Figure 1.** Pennant-winged Nightjar / Engoulevent porte-étendard *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* (Jon Hornbuckle)

**Figure 2.** Pennant-winged Nightjar / Engoulevent porte-étendard *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* (Phil Palmer)







**Figure 3.** Standard-winged Nightjar / Engoulevent à balanciers *Macrodipteryx longipennis* (Bruno Portier)



**Figure 4.** Standard-winged Nightjar / Engoulevent à balanciers *Macrodipteryx longipennis* (Ian Fulton)

of time when the birds are most active. Fig. 2 shows typical counts for male Standard-winged Nightjars in relation to the estimated time of sunset. Females were also counted but their numbers are less reliable, since without good views they can resemble other species present. However, taking the most probable counts of females, their numbers were comparable to those of males, despite Fry *et al.* (1988) stating that the sexes migrate separately. For Standard-winged, activity of males was mainly between 19.25 and 19.45 hrs, peaking c.25 minutes after sunset (Fig. 2). Female numbers peaked at c.19.50 hrs, some 15 minutes after the males. Pennant-winged Nightjars were active rather earlier, mainly between 19.10 and 19.30 hrs for males, c.15 minutes after sunset. As with Standard-winged, female activity peaked a few minutes later than the males. There were no obvious differences in results between clear and cloudy evenings.

We conclude that our method is a satisfactory way of monitoring these two species, and could be applied to other sites where they are common. These data for Uganda are already included in Uganda's official set of biodiversity indicators.

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# Birds of Dindéfello Nature Reserve, south-east Senegal

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**Les oiseaux de la Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello, sud-est du Sénégal.** Nous présentons les résultats d'un inventaire ornithologique de la Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello, une zone de 13.150 ha dans la région de Kédougou, au sud-est du Sénégal. Le travail de terrain a été effectué principalement au cours de trois visites en 2011. Au total, 220 espèces ont été recensées, 16 d'entre elles présentant une extension de l'aire connue de répartition. Six espèces de rapaces diurnes sont d'intérêt pour la conservation. La Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello est le seul endroit connu actuellement au Sénégal pour six espèces, en raison de la présence de falaises et de forêts galeries dans les ravins—des habitats qui sont rares dans le pays. L'Amarante du Mali *Lagonosticta virata*, rarement enregistré au Sénégal, a également été observé.

**Summary.** We present the results of a bird survey in Dindéfello Nature Reserve, a 13,150 ha area in the Kédougou region, south-east Senegal. Field work was mainly conducted during three visits in 2011. A total of 220 species was recorded, 16 of them extending previously known ranges. Six diurnal raptors are of conservation concern. Dindéfello Nature Reserve is the only currently known location in Senegal for six species, due to the occurrence of cliffs and gallery forests in ravines—habitats that are rare in the country. Kulikoro Firefinch *Lagonosticta virata*, rarely recorded in Senegal, was also found.

The avifauna of the coastal strip of Senegal is relatively well known, as estuaries and wetlands associated with the Senegal, Gambia, Saloum and Casamance Rivers have been the subject of research and ringing campaigns in recent decades, and are regularly visited by European and African ornithologists (Zwarts *et al.* 2010). In contrast, information concerning large parts of the interior is comparatively weak and, in general, data concerning species occurrence and distribution come from occasional and usually old surveys (Coulthard 2001). In south-east Senegal, more systematic surveys were conducted in Niokolo-Koba National Park (Dupuy 1970, Morel & Morel 1990), but for the adjacent region of Kédougou in particular, the only available literature seems to be Morel (1985), apart from several records by Sauvage & Rodwell (1998) and, more recently, R. Demey (*in Bull. ABC* 17: 123; *in litt.* 2012).

Dindéfello Nature Reserve was formally established in 2010 by an agreement between the Spanish branch of The Jane Goodall Institute and the Communauté Rurale de Dindéfello. The goal was to contribute to the conservation of natural resources and the socio-economic development of the local population, via the implementation of sustainable and promotional activities. The theoretical model of management follows that proposed by IUCN for the so-called Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas, with the

local community as the basic agent, supported by external advice. Within this framework, an ornithological survey was conducted in the reserve to determine the most important species, and subsequently to promote their conservation or their use in awareness and ecotourism programmes.

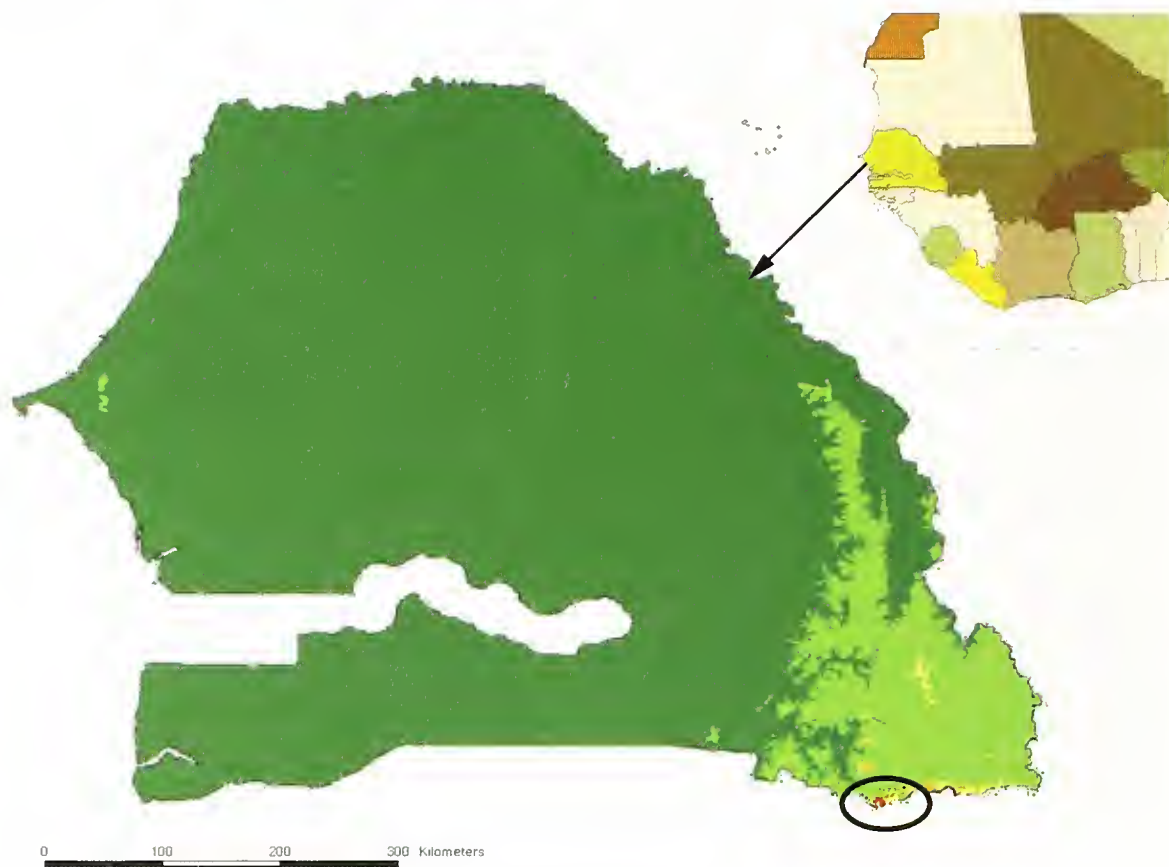
Coulthard (2001), who reviewed ornithological knowledge for Senegal to identify Important Bird Areas (IBAs), stated that the region of Kédougou merited field studies, given the presence of certain habitats extremely rare in the rest of the country. Here we provide a list of bird species recorded at Dindéfello Nature Reserve during surveys in 2011, highlighting those relevant either from conservation or biogeographical perspectives.

## Study area

Dindéfello Nature Reserve (12°24'N 12°18'W) covers c.13,150 ha. Its boundaries follow the border between Senegal and Guinea-Conakry to the west and south, the Gambia River to the east, and a buffer zone separating small villages, crop fields and plantations to the north (Fig. 1).

The reserve has an unusual altitudinal variation in the context of Senegal, as it includes a basal plain at a mean altitude of 150 m, and an east-west oriented massif with steep slopes and rocky cliffs, topped by a laterite plateau at 400–450 m. This massif forms the north-westernmost extension of the Fouta Djallon highlands.





**Figure 1.** Location of Dindéfello Nature Reserve within West Africa and Senegal, showing the altitudinal range (0–500 m) for the country.

Situation géographique de la Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello en Afrique de l'Ouest et au Sénégal, montrant la variation d'altitude (0–500 m) pour le pays.

Biogeographically, Dindéfello Nature Reserve straddles two ecoregions: the 'forest mosaic-Guinean savannah' and 'Sudan savannah' (Burgess *et al.* 2004, Oates 2011). The former has a four-month dry season and consists of a mosaic of forest patches, crops and pasture woodlands, as a result of historic processes of cutting and burning of the original dry forest by the human population. The forest patches are poorer in plant species than the coastal rainforest. As for Sudan savannah, the longer dry season drives a reduction of the forest canopy and the size of trees, and a greater herbaceous cover.

Local topographic factors influence the structure and composition of the habitats, approaching in some cases the forest-mosaic type (semi-deciduous forests, gallery forests in ravines and drainages) and the more seasonal Sudan savannah in others (grassland with woodland patches interspersed in *boue* or lateritic soils; see Figs. 2–4). The semi-deciduous forest covering



**Figure 2.** Savannah with patches of grass and shrubs, semi-deciduous forest on the foothills and rocky cliffs, during the wet season, Dindéfello Nature Reserve, Senegal, September 2011 (J. M. Fernández-García)

Savane avec des parcelles d'herbes et d'arbustes, et de la forêt semi-décidue sur les contreforts et les escarpements rocheux, pendant la saison des pluies, Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello, Sénégal, septembre 2011 (J. M. Fernández-García)



**Figure 3.** Interior view of a gallery forest, Dindéfello Nature Reserve, Senegal, April 2011 (N. Ruiz de Azua)  
 Vue à l'intérieur d'une forêt galerie, Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello, Sénégal, avril 2011 (N. Ruiz de Azua)



**Figure 4.** Seasonal grasslands on lateritic soils (*boue*) and forest patches cover the plateau of Dindéfello Nature Reserve, Senegal, September 2011 (N. Ruiz de Azua)  
 Des prairies saisonnières sur cuirasses latéritiques (*boue*) et des parcelles de forêt couvrent le plateau de la Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello, Sénégal, septembre 2011 (N. Ruiz de Azua)

the mountain slopes is characterised by *Bombax costatum*, *Vitellaria paradoxa*, *Combretum glutinosum*, *Ficus* sp., *Nauclea lautifolia*, *Parkia*

*biglobosa*, *Piliostigma thonningii*, *Azelia africana*, *Pterocarpus erinaceus* and dense patches of bamboo *Oxytenanthera abyssinica*. Predominant tree species in the gallery forests are *Carapa procera*, *Ceiba pentandra*, *Pseudospondias microcarpa*, *Cola cordifolia* and *Borassus aethiopum*, and the liana *Saba senegalensis*. The grasslands are dominated by the genera *Sacciolepis*, *Echinochloa*, *Setaria*, *Leersia*, *Vitiveria*, *Panicum* and *Acroceras*, whilst wooded patches in savannah include *Bombax costatum*, *Vitellaria paradoxa*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Dichrostachys cinerea* and *Caparis tomentosa*.

## Methods

Data were primarily collected during three visits in 2011 (17–30 January, 21–30 April and 15 September–1 October), totalling 32 field days. The first two surveys were conducted in the dry season, whilst the third was at the end of the rainy season, with many passerines exhibiting conspicuous breeding plumages.

Bird species were recorded during transects and point counts, which covered every representative habitat within the reserve. Less accessible sectors, such as the eastern border, were under-visited. Field work was performed from dawn (c.06.00 hrs) until 13.00–14.00 hrs, and from 17.00 hrs until dusk. Some species were recorded opportunistically at night. Field guides used for identification were Barlow *et al.* (2002b) and Borrow & Demey (2008), while Barlow *et al.* (2002a) and <http://www.xeno-canto.org/africa> were consulted with respect to vocalisations. We did not use playback to attract inconspicuous species, nor did we apply quantitative census methods. However, encounter rates were estimated using the frequency of daily records, considering the number of visits to appropriate habitats and seasons of the year. Mist-netting was carried out during five mornings in one gallery forest patch (total length of mist-nets: 24 m). Finally, some previous photographic records compiled by Jane Goodall Institute staff at Dindéfello were taken into account.

## Results

We recorded 220 species, 208 during field work in 2011, and 12 based on photographs taken in 2010 (Table 1). Recent checklists for Senegal (Borrow & Demey 2011, Lepage 2011, Dowsett *et al.* 2012) include 591–599 species, depending



on taxonomy. Thus, our survey recorded 37% of the country's known species.

Sixteen species that occur in Dindéfello were not previously mapped for south-east Senegal by Morel & Morel (1990) and Borrow & Demey (2011). For 14 additional species only single or old records were available for the region (Morel 1985, Morel & Morel 1990, Sauvage & Rodwell 1998).

Dindéfello Nature Reserve is the only currently known location in Senegal for Fox Kestrel *Falco alopex*, Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*, Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*, Mocking Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris*, Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni* and Dybowski's Twinspot *Euschistospiza dybowskii*. Dindéfello's unique avifauna (within a Senegalese context) is related to the presence of habitats rare in Senegal, such as cliffs and gallery forests in ravines.

Six species are of conservation concern, i.e. 25% of the globally threatened species known from Senegal (BirdLife International 2012): one is classified as Endangered (Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*), two as Vulnerable (Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* and Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini*) and three as Near Threatened (White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*, Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* and Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*).

Among the 33 species restricted to the Sudan-Guinea savanna biome (Coulthard 2001), 23 occur in Dindéfello. In Senegal, only Niokolo-Koba National Park, c.70 times larger, boasts a comparable number.

Senegal has no avian endemics, but the south-east, including Dindéfello, are home to Kulikoro Firefinch *Lagonosticta virata*, otherwise known only from the Upper Niger Valley in Mali and a few records from south-east Senegal (Coulthard 2001).

Finally, we found an unexpected pattern of disjunct distribution for several forest species that occur both in the south-west (Casamance region) and south-east of the country. These include Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer*, Green Turaco *Tauraco persa*, Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*, Green-headed Sunbird *Cyanomitra verticalis*, Copper Sunbird *Cynnirris cupreus* and Variable Sunbird *C. venustus*. Whether this pattern of separate ranges is a consequence of

ecological conditions or the result of incomplete data for inland Senegal is unknown.

## Notes on selected species

### Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Two soaring overhead on 26 January. Regular in small numbers in the extreme north-west, with few records elsewhere (Sauvage & Rodwell 1998, Walsh 2002; R. Demey in *Bull. ABC* 17: 123). However, recent data from satellite-tracked birds reveal regular migrants and wintering individuals in eastern Senegal, in the Senegal and Falémé River basins (Bobek *et al.* 2008, Chevallier *et al.* 2011).

### African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*

An adult flushed and heard calling in a forest patch on 29 September. Few records for Senegal of this non-breeding visitor (Barlow *et al.* 2002b mentions only five), most in the south-west.

### Red-chested Goshawk *Accipiter toussenellii* (= *A. tachiro macroselides*)

An adult photographed in gallery forest in March 2010 (Fig. 5). Mainly restricted to the Casamance, with scattered records in the Gambia River basin,



**Figure 5.** Red-chested Goshawk / Autour de Toussenel *Accipiter toussenellii*, Dindéfello Nature Reserve, Senegal, September 2010 (L. Pacheco)

east to Niokolo-Koba National Park (Sauvage & Rodwell 1998, Borrow & Demey 2011).

**Red-thighed Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter erythropus*

One in gallery forest in April. Mainly restricted to south-west Senegal, with scattered records east to Niokolo-Koba National Park (Sauvage & Rodwell 1998, Borrow & Demey 2011).

**Fox Kestrel** *Falco alopex*

Present year-round and regularly observed hunting over the plateau's savannah. A pair was seen perched on a cliff on 21 September. Apart from Dindéfello, where the species was first found in 1984, in Senegal Fox Kestrel has been recorded only in Niokolo-Koba National Park (Morel 1985).

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus*

A nest with three full-grown chicks found on a cliff on 26 April. Breeding in Senegal apparently still required confirmation (Barlow *et al.* 2002b, Dowsett *et al.* 2012).

**Common Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus*

One flushed in grassland on 23 April. Knowledge of the distribution and movements of this secretive species are possibly incomplete for Senegal.

**Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi*

One photographed in pastureland in August 2010. In Senegal, this species is rare and has only been recorded in the south-east (Morel & Morel 1990, Borrow & Demey 2011).

**African Green Pigeon** *Treron calvus*

Regularly seen, occurring alongside the more abundant Bruce's Green Pigeon *T. waalia*. In Senegal mapped only for the west and the Gambia River basin in Morel & Morel (1990) and Borrow & Demey (2011).

**Adamawa Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia hypopyrrha*

Small flocks and pairs observed in riverine forests in April and September. The only previous records in Senegal are from Niokolo-Koba National Park (Baillon 1992, Sauvage & Rodwell 1998) and Sabodala, Kédougou region (R. Demey in *Bull. ABC* 17: 123).

**Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadrybrachys*

One observed in gallery forest in June 2010. Known from western Senegal (Casamance, Saloum), with a few records from Niokolo-Koba National Park (Sauvage & Rodwell 1998).

**Little Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis*

A small flock in September of this typical Sahelian bee-eater, which is not mapped for southernmost Senegal in Borrow & Demey (2011).

**Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina*

The first records for Senegal were made in Dindéfello in April 2010 (Aransay *et al.* 2012). Additionally, we photographed a female in gallery forest on 30 April 2011.

**Singing Bush Lark** *Mirafra cantillans*

Singles observed twice in April, in grasslands or *bowe*. Relatively common in northern Senegal, but there is just one previous record from the Kédougou area (Morel & Morel 1990, Borrow & Demey 2011).

**Flappet Lark** *Mirafra rufocinnamomea*

One in grassland on 24 April. Morel & Morel (1990) mention only one record for the Kédougou region; its status in Senegal is unclear.

**Rock Martin** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

Regularly seen throughout the year. Its presence at Dindéfello was discovered by Morel (1985), but he could not establish the species' status. We observed nests and chicks being fed by adults in September. This is the first confirmed breeding for Senegal and still the only known locality in the country (*cf.* Borrow & Demey 2011).

**Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica*

Several females in dry grassland on 24 April. Distinguished from Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe* by the sandy-buff to ochre-tinged upperparts, uneven terminal tail-band with slightly more black at the sides and less in the centre, and slimmer body. There are apparently no previous records from southern Senegal: the species is not mapped for the area in Borrow & Demey (2011).

**Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis*

One male in lightly wooded savannah on 21 January. Few records for Senegal, with just one



from the Kédougou area, in March 1972 (Morel 1985, Borrow & Demey 2011).

**Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida*

Seen and photographed in April and September, with 1–2 individuals joining mixed-species flocks in the canopy of gallery forest. Discovered in Senegal as recently as 2004, in Mako near Niokolo-Koba National Park, and since then just two additional records reported (B. Greiner & L. Greiner in *Bull. ABC* 12: 188; A. Geilvoet in *Bull. ABC* 14: 102).

**Olive Sunbird** *Cyanomitra olivacea*

One photographed in gallery forest in March 2010. In Senegal mainly restricted to the Casamance region, and previously recorded at just two sites in the south-east (Niokolo-Koba National Park and near Kédougou: Morel & Morel 1990).

**Neumann's Starling** *Onychognathus neumanni*

In small groups, in the wooded belt and savannah around cliffs. Dindéfello is the only known location in Senegal where the species is regularly recorded (Morel 1985, Sauvage & Rodwell 1998).

**Greater Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*

Regularly observed in April and September. Distinguished from the commoner Lesser Blue-eared Starling *L. chloropterus* by its longer tail and larger size, which were quite apparent when both species were seen together. Morel & Morel (1990) considered this starling to be rare to scarce south of the Gambia River.

**Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea*

Small flocks in non-breeding plumage recorded several times in April. Not mapped for the extreme south-east in Morel & Morel (1990) and Borrow & Demey (2011).

**Dybowski's Twinspot** *Euschistospiza dybowskii*

A female with Red-billed Firefinches *Lagonosticta senegala* on 16 April. Apparently only two previous records for Senegal, both from the extreme south-east, at Dindéfello and nearby Ségou (Morel & Morel 1990), at the north-westernmost edge of the species' range.



**Figure 6.** Male Kulikoro (Mali) Firefinch / Amarante du Mali *Lagonosticta virata*, Dindéfello Nature Reserve, Senegal, April 2011 (J. M. Fernández-García)

**Kulikoro (Mali) Firefinch** *Lagonosticta virata*

One mist-netted in shrubby secondary forest on 26 April (Fig. 6). Identified by the relatively slender bill with bluish lower and darker upper mandible tending to blackish on the tip, pinkish orbital ring and black undertail-coverts. Sexed as a male, based on its deep red underparts. Separated from the similar Blue-billed Firefinch *L. rubricata polionota* by the narrow slightly curved bill, the broad unemarginated outer primaries, and the fewer white spots on the breast-sides (Payne 2005, Borrow & Demey 2011), although the last-named feature is not always diagnostic (R. Payne in *litt.* 2012). The rocky habitat at Dindéfello is also typical of this species (Payne 2005). There are only two previous records for Senegal, in 1966 and 2009, both from the Kédougou region (Payne 1997; R. Demey in *Bull. ABC* 17: 123).

**Wilson's Indigobird** *Vidua wilsoni*

A pair copulating on 30 September. The male was separated from the much more frequent Village Indigobird *V. chalybeata* by its brown, pale-fringed flight feathers and pale legs, and from Quailfinch *V. nigeriae* and Barka Indigobirds *V. larvaticola* by the absence of glossy green plumage tones and the briefly heard vocalisations, mimicking the present species' host, Bar-breasted Firefinch *Lagonosticta rufopicta*. This confirms breeding in Senegal, which is not listed by Dowsett *et al.* (2012). Wilson's Indigobird is a relatively recent addition to the Senegal list (not mentioned by Morel & Morel 1990) and its known distribution comprises Niokolo-Koba National Park (Borrow & Demey 2011). Probably the species has been

overlooked in other areas due to confusion with Village Indigobird.

### Species previously recorded from the study area but not found by us

#### **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*

Morel (1985) provides the only reliable record of possible breeding in Senegal: a female about to lay captured at Dindéfello in March 1972. This location holds the best breeding habitat for the species in the country, but we were unable to confirm its presence. Some satellite-tracked Western Palearctic migrants winter in eastern Senegal (Meyburg *et al.* 2004, García-Ripollés *et al.* 2010).

#### **Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia*

Morel (1985) mentions that the wild race *gymnocycla* was observed 'in considerable numbers' on the cliffs in Dindéfello in 1984, but we found only feral birds (*C. l. f. domestica*).

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**Appendix 1.** Bird species recorded in Dindéfello Nature Reserve, south-east Senegal, in 2011. Sequence and taxonomy follow Dowsett *et al.* (2012) with a few amendments. Status in Senegal (Borrow & Demey 2011): R = Resident, M = Intra-African migrant, P = Palearctic migrant, V = Vagrant. IUCN threat status (BirdLife International 2012): EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened. Biome-confined species (Coulthard 2001): SG = Sudan-Guinea Savanna, GC = Guinea-Congo Forests. Encounter rate: C = common or fairly common (species recorded on most days in appropriate habitat and period of year), U = uncommon (irregularly recorded in appropriate habitat and not on the majority of days), R = rare (very few records of singles or pairs).

**Annexe 1.** Espèces d'oiseaux observées dans la Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello, sud-est du Sénégal, en 2011. L'ordre et la taxonomie suivent Dowsett *et al.* (2012) avec quelques amendements. Statut au Sénégal (Borrow & Demey 2011) : R = Résident, M = Migrateur intra-africain, P = Migrateur paléarctique, V = Occasionnel. Statut de conservation UICN (BirdLife International 2012) : EN = Menacé d'extinction, VU = Vulnérable, NT = Quasi menacé. Espèces inféodées à un certain biome (Coulthard 2001) : SG = Savane soudano-guinéenne, GC = Forêts guinéo-congolaises. Fréquence d'observation : C = commune ou assez commune (espèce observée quotidiennement ou sur >50% des jours dans le bon milieu et la période de l'année appropriée), U = peu commune (irrégulièrement observée – <50% des jours – dans le bon milieu), R = rare (très peu d'observations d'individus solitaires ou de couples).

		Status	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
<b>PHALACROCORACIDAE</b>					
<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>	Reed Cormorant	R			C
<b>ARDEIDAE</b>					
<i>Butorides striata</i>	Striated Heron	R			U
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Cattle Egret	R/M			U
<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Little Egret	R/P			U
<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	Intermediate Egret	R			U

<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Purple Heron	R/P			U
<b>SCOPIDAE</b>					
<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Hamerkop	R			C
<b>CICONIIDAE</b>					
<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Black Stork	P			R
<b>THRESKIORNITHIDAE</b>					
<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	Hadada Ibis	R			U
<b>ACCIPITRIDAE</b>					
<i>Aviceda cuculoides</i>	African Cuckoo Hawk	M			R
<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	Yellow-billed Kite	M/R			U
<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	African Fish Eagle	R			U
<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	Palm-nut Vulture	R			U
<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	Hooded Vulture	R	EN		C
<i>Gyps africanus</i>	White-backed Vulture	R	NT		C
<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>	Lappet-faced Vulture	R	VU		U
<i>Circaetus beaudouini</i>	Beaudouin's Snake Eagle	R	VU		U
<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	Brown Snake Eagle	R			C
<i>Circaetus cinerascens</i>	Western Banded Snake Eagle	R			U
<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	Bateleur	R	NT		C
<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	African Harrier Hawk	R			U
<i>Micronisus gabar</i>	Gabar Goshawk	R			C
<i>Accipiter toussenelii</i>	Red-chested Goshawk	R			R
<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Shikra	R/M			C
<i>Accipiter erythropus</i>	Red-thighed Sparrowhawk	R		GC	R
<i>Butastur rufipennis</i>	Grasshopper Buzzard	M			U
<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	Lizard Buzzard	R			C
<i>Buteo auguralis</i>	Red-necked Buzzard	M			U
<i>Aquila rapax</i>	Tawny Eagle	R			U
<i>Aquila spilogaster</i>	African Hawk Eagle	R			C
<i>Lophaelus occipitalis</i>	Long-crested Eagle	R			U
<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	Martial Eagle	R	NT		U
<b>FALCONIDAE</b>					
<i>Falco alopex</i>	Fox Kestrel	V		SG	C
<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>	Grey Kestrel	R			U
<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	Lanner Falcon	R			C
<b>NUMIDIDAE</b>					
<i>Numida meleagris</i>	Helmeted Guineafowl	R			R
<b>PHASIINIDAE</b>					
<i>Ptilopachus petrosus</i>	Stone Partridge	R			C
<i>Pternistis bicalcaratus</i>	Double-spurred Francolin	R			C
<b>TURNICIDAE</b>					
<i>Turnix sylvaticus</i>	Common Buttonquail	R/M			R
<b>BURHINIDAE</b>					
<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>	Senegal Thick-knee	R			U
<b>CHARADRIIDAE</b>					
<i>Charadrius forbesi</i>	Forbes's Plover	M			R
<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	African Wattled Lapwing	R			C

		Status	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate			Status	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
<i>Vanellus albiceps</i>	White-crowned Lapwing	R/M		C		<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>	Striped Kingfisher	R		R	
<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	Spur-winged Lapwing	R		U		<i>Ceyx pictus</i>	African Pygmy Kingfisher	R/M		C	
<b>JACANIDAE</b>						<i>Alcedo cristata</i>	Malachite Kingfisher	R		U	
<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	African Jacana	R		U		<i>Alcedo quadribrachys</i>	Shining-blue Kingfisher	R		R	
<b>SCOLOPACIDAE</b>						<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>	Giant Kingfisher	R		U	
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	P		U		<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Pied Kingfisher	R		C	
<b>COLUMBIDAE</b>						<b>MEROPIDAE</b>					
<i>Treron calvus</i>	African Green Pigeon	R		C		<i>Merops pusillus</i>	Little Bee-eater	R		C	
<i>Treron waalia</i>	Bruce's Green Pigeon	R		C		<i>Merops hirundineus</i>	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	R/M		U	
<i>Turtur afer</i>	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	R		C		<i>Merops bulocki</i>	Red-throated Bee-eater	R	SG	C	
<i>Turtur abyssinicus</i>	Black-billed Wood Dove	R		C		<i>Merops albicollis</i>	White-throated Bee-eater	M		R	
<i>Oena capensis</i>	Namaqua Dove	R/M		C		<i>Merops orientalis</i>	Little Green Bee-eater	R		R	
<i>Columba guinea</i>	Speckled Pigeon	R		C		<i>Merops apiaster</i>	European Bee-eater	P		C	
<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	Red-eyed Dove	R		C		<i>Merops nubicus</i>	Northern Carmine Bee-eater	M		U	
<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>	Vinaceous Dove	R		C		<b>CORACIIDAE</b>					
<i>Streptopelia hypopyrrha</i>	Adamawa Turtle Dove	R	SG	U		<i>Coracias naevius</i>	Rufous-crowned Roller	R/M		U	
<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Laughing Dove	R		C		<i>Coracias cyanogaster</i>	Blue-bellied Roller	R	SG	C	
<b>PSITTACIDAE</b>						<i>Coracias abyssinicus</i>	Abyssinian Roller	M		U	
<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Rose-ringed Parakeet	R		C		<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	Broad-billed Roller	R/M		U	
<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i>	Senegal Parrot	R	SG	C		<b>PHOENICULIDAE</b>					
<b>MUSOPHAGIDAE</b>						<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	Green Wood-hoopoe	R		C	
<i>Tauraco persa</i>	Guinea Turaco	R	GC	C		<i>Rhinopomastus aterrimus</i>	Black Scimitarbill	R		U	
<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	Violet Turaco	R	SG	C		<b>UPUPIDAE</b>					
<i>Cnifer piscator</i>	Western Plantain-eater	R		C		<i>Upupa epops</i>	Eurasian Hoopoe	P/R?		R	
<b>CUCULIDAE</b>						<b>BUCEROTIDAE</b>					
<i>Clamator levaillantii</i>	Levaillant's Cuckoo	M		U		<i>Bucorvus abyssinicus</i>	Abyssinian Ground Hornbill	R		R	
<i>Cuculus gularis</i>	African Cuckoo	M		U		<i>Tockus kempii</i>	Western Red-billed Hornbill	R		C	
<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	Klaas's Cuckoo	R/M		U		<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	African Grey Hornbill	R/M		C	
<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	Senegal Coucal	R		C		<b>CAPITONIDAE</b>					
<b>STRIGIDAE</b>						<i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i>	Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	R		U	
<i>Otus senegalensis</i>	African Scops Owl	R		U		<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>	Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	R		C	
<i>Ptilopsis leucotis</i>	Northern White-faced Owl	R		C		<i>Lybius vieilloti</i>	Vieillot's Barbet	R		U	
<i>Bubo cinerascens</i>	Greyish Eagle Owl	R		U		<i>Lybius dubius</i>	Bearded Barbet	R	SG	C	
<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>	Pearl-spotted Owlet	R		C		<b>INDICATORIDAE</b>					
<b>CAPRIMULGIDAE</b>						<i>Indicator indicator</i>	Greater Honeyguide	R		C	
<i>Caprimulgus inornatus</i>	Plain Nightjar	M		U		<i>Indicator minor</i>	Lesser Honeyguide	R		U	
<i>Macrodipteryx longipennis</i>	Standard-winged Nightjar	R/M		U		<b>PICIDAE</b>					
<b>APODIDAE</b>						<i>Campethera punctuligera</i>	Fine-spotted Woodpecker	R		C	
<i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>	Mottled Spinetail	R		U		<i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i>	Cardinal Woodpecker	R		U	
<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	African Palm Swift	R		C		<i>Dendropicos goertae</i>	Grey Woodpecker	R		U	
<i>Apus affinis</i>	Little Swift	R		U		<b>ALAUDIDAE</b>					
<b>TROGONIDAE</b>						<i>Mirafr cantillans</i>	Singing Bush Lark	R		U	
<i>Apaloderma nana</i>	Narina's Trogon	R		R		<i>Mirafr rufocinnamomea</i>	Flappet Lark	R		U	
<b>ALCEDINIDAE</b>						<i>Galerida modesta</i>	Sun Lark	R	SG	C	
<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	Grey-headed Kingfisher	R/M		U		<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>	Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark	R/M		C	
<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>	Blue-breasted Kingfisher	R		U							
<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	Woodland Kingfisher	R/M		U							



		Status	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate			Status	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
<b>HIRUNDINIDAE</b>						<b>MUSCICAPIDAE</b>					
<i>Psaldiprocne obscura</i>	Fanti Saw-wing	R/M		GC	U	<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i>	Northern Black Flycatcher	R			C
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Common Sand Martin	P			U	<i>Bradornis pallidus</i>	Pale Flycatcher	R			C
<i>Cecropis senegalensis</i>	Mosque Swallow	R/M			C	<i>Muscicapa aquatica</i>	Swamp Flycatcher	R			U
<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	Red-rumped Swallow	P			C	<i>Myioparus plumbeus</i>	Grey Tit-Flycatcher	R			U
<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	Rock Martin	R			C	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	European Pied Flycatcher	P			C
<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	Wire-tailed Swallow	R			C	<b>MONARCHIDAE</b>					
<i>Hirundo leucosoma</i>	Pied-winged Swallow	R		SG	U	<i>Elminia longicauda</i>	African Blue Flycatcher	R			C
<i>Hirundo lucida</i>	Red-chested Swallow	R			C	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	African Paradise Flycatcher	R			C
<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Common House Martin	P			C	<b>PLATYSTEIRIDAE</b>					
<b>MOTACILLIDAE</b>						<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	R			C
<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Tree Pipit	P			U	<i>Batis senegalensis</i>	Senegal Batis	R			C
<b>CAMPEPHAGIDAE</b>						<b>TIMALIIDAE</b>					
<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>	Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike	R/M			U	<i>Turdoides plebejus</i>	Brown Babbler	R			C
<b>PYCNONOTIDAE</b>						<i>Turdoides reinwardtii</i>	Blackcap Babbler	R		SG	C
<i>Chlorocichla flavicollis</i>	Yellow-throated Leaflove	R			C	<b>PARIDAE</b>					
<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	Common Bulbul	R			C	<i>Parus (leucomelas) guineensis</i>	White-shouldered Black Tit	R			U
<b>TURDIDAE</b>						<b>REMIZIDAE</b>					
<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>	Snowy-crowned Robin Chat	R			C	<i>Anthoscopus parvulus</i>	Yellow Penduline Tit	R		SG	U
<i>Cossypha albicapillus</i>	White-crowned Robin Chat	R		SG	C	<b>NECTARINIIDAE</b>					
<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	Black-eared Wheatear	P			U	<i>Anthreptes longuemarei</i>	Western Violet-backed Sunbird	R			U
<i>Cercomela familiaris</i>	Familiar Chat	R			C	<i>Hedydipna platura</i>	Pygmy Sunbird	R/M			C
<i>Myrmecocichla albifrons</i>	White-fronted Black Chat	R		SG	C	<i>Cyanomitra verticalis</i>	Green-headed Sunbird	R			C
<i>Thamnodaea cinnamomeiventris</i>	Mocking Cliff Chat	R			C	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	Olive Sunbird	R			R
<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	Common Rock Thrush	P			R	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	R			C
<i>Turdus pelios</i>	African Thrush	R			C	<i>Cinnyris pulchellus</i>	Beautiful Sunbird	R			C
<b>SYLVIIDAE</b>						<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>	Variable Sunbird	R			U
<i>Melocichla mentalis</i>	Moustached Grass Warbler	R			U	<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>	Copper Sunbird	R			U
<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	Melodious Warbler	P			C	<b>ZOSTEROPIDAE</b>					
<i>Eremomela pusilla</i>	Senegal Eremomela	R		SG	C	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	African Yellow White-eye	R			C
<i>Sylvietta brachyura</i>	Northern Crombec	R			C	<b>LANIIDAE</b>					
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Willow Warbler	P			C	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Woodchat Shrike	P			R
<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Common Chiffchaff	P			C	<i>Corvinella corvina</i>	Yellow-billed Shrike	R		SG	C
<i>Sylvia borin</i>	Garden Warbler	P			C	<b>MALACONOTIDAE</b>					
<i>Hylia flavigaster</i>	Yellow-bellied Hylia	R			U	<i>Malacnotus blanchoti</i>	Grey-headed Bushshrike	R			U
<b>CISTICOLIDAE</b>						<i>Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus</i>	Orange-breasted Bushshrike	R			R
<i>Cisticola cantans</i>	Singing Cisticola	R			C	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	Black-crowned Tchagra	R			U
<i>Cisticola brachypterus</i>	Short-winged Cisticola	R			U	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>	Northern Puffback	R			C
<i>Cisticola rufus</i>	Rufous Cisticola	R		SG	U	<i>Laniarius barbarus</i>	Yellow-crowned Gonolek	R			C
<i>Prinia subflava</i>	Tawny-flanked Prinia	R			C	<i>Nilais afer</i>	Brubru	R			C
<i>Heliolais erythropterus</i>	Red-winged Warbler	R			U	<b>PRIONOPIIDAE</b>					
<i>Apalis flavida</i>	Yellow-breasted Apalis	R			C	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>	White-crested Helmetshrike	R			C
<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>	Green-backed Camaroptera	R			C						

		Status	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate			Status	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
<b>ORIOLIDAE</b>						<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	Village Weaver	R			C
<i>Oriolus auratus</i>	African Golden Oriole	R/M			C	<i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>	Red-headed Weaver	R			U
<b>DICRURIDAE</b>						<i>Quelea erythrops</i>	Red-headed Quelea	R?/M			U
<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	Fork-tailed Drongo	R			C	<i>Quelea quelea</i>	Red-billed Quelea	R/M			U
<b>CORVIDAE</b>						<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>	Northern Red Bishop	R			C
<i>Corvus albus</i>	Pied Crow	R			U	<i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>	Black-winged Red Bishop	R			C
<i>Ptilostomus afer</i>	Piapiac	R		SG	C	<i>Euplectes macroura</i>	Yellow-mantled Widowbird	R			U
<b>STURNIDAE</b>						<b>ESTRILDIDAE</b>					
<i>Onychognathus neumanni</i>	Neumann's Starling	R			C	<i>Estrilda caerulescens</i>	Lavender Waxbill	R		SG	C
<i>Lamprotornis purpureus</i>	Purple Glossy Starling	R		SG	C	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	Orange-cheeked Waxbill	R			C
<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>	Greater Blue-eared Starling	R			C	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	R			C
<i>Lamprotornis chloropterus</i>	Lesser Blue-eared Starling	R			C	<i>Euschistospiza dybowskii</i>	Dybowskii's Twinspot	R		SG	U
<i>Lamprotornis caudatus</i>	Long-tailed Glossy Starling	R			C	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	Red-billed Firefinch	R			C
<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>	Violet-backed Starling	M			U	<i>Lagonosticta rufopicta</i>	Bar-breasted Firefinch	R			C
<b>BUPHAGIDAE</b>						<i>Lagonosticta virata</i>	Kulikoro (Mali) Firefinch	R		SG	R
<i>Buphagus africanus</i>	Yellow-billed Oxpecker	R			R	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	Bronze Mannikin	R			C
<b>PASSERIDAE</b>						<b>VIDUIDAE</b>					
<i>Passer griseus</i>	Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	R			C	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	Pin-tailed Whydah	R			C
<i>Gymnoris (Petronia) dentata</i>	Bush Petronia	R		SG	C	<i>Vidua interjecta</i>	Exclamatory Paradise Whydah	R			U
<b>PLOCEIDAE</b>						<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>	Village Indigobird	R			C
<i>Plocepasser superciliosus</i>	Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver	R		SG	U	<i>Vidua wilsoni</i>	Wilson's Indigobird	R			R
<i>Ploceus luteolus</i>	Little Weaver	R			U	<b>FRINGILLIDAE</b>					
<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	Black-necked Weaver	R			U	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>	Yellow-fronted Canary	R			C
<i>Ploceus vitellinus</i>	Vitelline Masked Weaver	R			C	<b>EMBERIZIDAE</b>					
						<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>	Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	R/M			U



# Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* in Angola, and its nest

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**O tecelão-de-mento-preto *Ploceus nigrimentus* em Angola, e o seu ninho.** O tecelão-de-mento-preto *Ploceus nigrimentus* é um residente pouco comum de pradarias abertas com poucas árvores, ocorrendo de forma irregular do sudeste do Gabão até à região centro-sul de Angola. A população de Angola é conhecida de sete espécimes, incluindo os dois tipos, dos planaltos do Bailundo nas províncias do Kwanza Sul e do Huambo, com o último registo datando de 1966. O ninho da espécie nunca foi descrito. Em abril / maio de 2011 MSLM observou uma fêmea e mais tarde um par de tecelões-de-mento-preto na região de Capaia na província de Lunda Norte, nordeste de Angola, a cerca de 700 km a nordeste dos registos prévios para Angola e a cerca de 600 km a sul do registo mais próximo que se conhece na Republica Democrática do Congo. MSLM recolheu também um ninho de tecelão atípico no local de observação da espécie, numa colónia de 10 ninhos numa árvore alta numa pradaria aberta. O ninho era idêntico a um ninho encontrado em 2006 em Lékoní, Gabão, onde um outro tecelão-de-mento-preto foi observado. Comparamos este ninho com os ninhos de outros tecelões do género *Ploceus* que ocorrem na província de Lunda Norte, mostrando que é maior e tem uma estrutura diferente, com a entrada mais para o topo do ninho. O ninho apresenta semelhanças com o do tecelão-de-Baglafecht *P. baglafecht*, uma espécie próxima. Consideramos por isso que este é um ninho de tecelão-de-mento-preto e apresentamos a primeira descrição. O ninho está depositado no Museu de História Natural, Tring, Reino Unido.

**Summary.** Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* is a scarce resident of open grassland with scattered trees, occurring patchily from south-east Gabon to south-central Angola. The Angolan population is known from seven specimens, including the two types, from the Bailundo Highlands of Kwanza Sul and Huambo provinces, with the last record in 1966. The species' nest is undescribed. In April / May 2011 MSLM observed a female and a pair of Black-chinned Weavers in the Capaia area of Lunda Norte province, north-east Angola, c.700 km north-east of the previous Angolan records and c.600 km south of the nearest known record in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He also collected an unusual weaver nest where one of these sightings was made, from a colony of ten nests on a tall tree in open grassland, identical to a nest found at Lékoní, Gabon, in 2006, where another Black-chinned Weaver was observed, and similar to the Black-chinned Weaver nest in the collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium. We compare the nest to that of other *Ploceus* weavers in Lunda Norte province, demonstrating that it is larger and has a different structure with the entrance towards the top of the nest. It is most similar to that of Baglafecht Weaver *P. baglafecht*. We provide the first description of the nest of Black-chinned Weaver and have deposited the nest in the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK.

**B**lack-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* is a scarce, localised resident of open grasslands with scattered trees in south-east Gabon, central Congo-Brazzaville and adjacent western Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC; Craig 2004). There is also an outlying population in the Bailundu highlands of central Angola, in the provinces of Huambo and southern Kwanza Sul (Traylor 1963, Dean 2000). The type specimens (two females) are from this population and were collected by J. Anchieta at Galanga (12°04'S 15°08'E; 1,580 m) in Huambo province (Bocage 1894a,b, Reichenow 1904) some time prior to 1894. Based on these specimens, Bocage (1894a,b) described a new species *Hyphantornis reichenowii*.

However, the name *reichenowii* was preoccupied by another weaver *Sycobrotus reichenowi* (now Baglafecht Weaver *P. baglafecht reichenowi*), so Reichenow (1904) renamed Black-chinned Weaver to *Ploceus nigrimentum* (the correct name, however, according to rules of gender agreement is *P. nigrimentus*: David & Gosselin 2002). The whereabouts of these two specimens is uncertain, but they were probably destroyed by the fire in the Museu Nacional de História Natural, Lisbon (Roselaar 2003).

There are few other Angolan records of Black-chinned Weaver. Dean (2000) lists two additional specimens: one collected at Mombolo (11°55'S 14°51'E; 1,790 m) housed in the American

Museum of Natural History, New York (AMNH) and the other from Huambo town (previously Nova Lisboa; 12°48'S, 15°45'E; 1,720 m) at the Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles (LACM; see Table 1). The AMNH has three other specimens, all collected at Mombolo. The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (<http://www.gbif.org/>) also lists two specimens from Angola: one collected at Huambo town which corresponds to the second specimen listed by Dean (2000), and one from Chipepe (12°00'S 14°56'E; 1,720 m) in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard (MCZ). Finally, there are another two specimens in the Lubango Bird Skin Collection, Lubango (LBSC) taken in the vicinity of Huambo town (Mills *et al.* 2011). The Angolan population appears to be known solely from these ten specimens (Table 1) all collected within a relatively small geographical and altitudinal range (1,580–1,790 m). Since 1966, there have been no confirmed records of the species in Angola despite attempts to relocate it in the Huambo / Kwanza Sul highlands (MSLM pers. obs.). A single report from the Gabela area was made (in the wrong habitat) by an inexperienced observer, who was unable to provide further information, meaning that it is treated as unconfirmed (Mills & Dean 2007).

Besides being localised and scarce, the species' breeding biology is virtually unknown. The only information given by Craig (2004, 2010), based on reports by P. Christy (A. Craig *in litt.* 2012),

is that the species is semi-colonial. The nest is undescribed, although P. Christy reports that in south-east Gabon they nest on the highest trees in the landscape, mainly in *Albizia* trees, placing their nests at the tips of branches. He reports that the nests are very large for weavers, are attached to branches at the top of the nest, and that the entrance is at the base the nest. He has recorded up to ten nests in a single tree (P. Christy *in litt.* 2011).

On 7 October 2006, while leading an African Bird Club / Birding Africa tour to Gabon, MSLM found a Black-chinned Weaver near Lékoni (01°36'N 14°15'E) and at the same locality noted an unusual weaver nest, which J. Caddick photographed (Fig. 1). Besides being large and woven from coarse material, the position of the entrance was rather unusual, being located on the side but near the top of the nest, rather than on the side but near or at the base of the nest, as it is in most weavers (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996, Borrow & Demey 2002, Craig 2004). The nest appeared similar in structure to that illustrated for Baglafaecht Weaver. However, MSLM collected no additional information on this nest.

In April / May 2011 MSLM joined a multidisciplinary biodiversity expedition to the north-eastern Angolan province of Lunda Norte, to conduct surveys in the Lagoa Carumbo area (07°48'S 19°57'E; Mills & Dean *in press*). On 28 April, while travelling to the study area from Lucapa (08°27'S 20°43'E), the team traversed

Table 1. Specimens of Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* collected in Angola.

AMNH = American Museum of Natural History, New York; LACM = Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, Los Angeles; LBSC = Lubango Bird Skin Collection; MCZ = Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard.

Tabela 1. Exemplos de tecelão-de-mento-preto *Ploceus nigrimentus* colhidos em Angola.

AMNH = Museu Americano de História Natural, Nova Iorque; LACM = Museu de História Natural do Condado de Los Angeles, Los Angeles; LBSC = Coleção de Peles de Aves do Lubango; MCZ = Museu de Zoologia Comparada, Harvard.

Year	Month	Locality	Collector	Museum (+ specimen no.)	Sex
<1894	-	Galanga	J. Anchieta	probably held in Lisbon (see text)	F
<1894	-	Galanga	J. Anchieta	probably held in Lisbon (see text)	F
1925	Aug	Mombolo	R. Boulton	AMNH	M
1927	May	Mombolo	H & C Chapman	AMNH (264791)	F
1927	May	Mombolo	H & C Chapman	AMNH (264792)	M
1927	Jun	Mombolo	H & C Chapman	AMNH (264793)	F
1928	Jun	Chipepe	P. Koester	MCZ (165976)	M
1960	Aug	Huambo	A. M. Costa	LACM (63857)	M
1966	Mar	Huambo	A. R. Pereira	LBSC (21301)	F
1966	Mar	Huambo	A. R. Pereira	LBSC (21302)	M



large areas of open grasslands between c.50 km south of Capaia (08°20'S 20°13'E) and 60 km north of Capaia. Although there was little time to make observations in this habitat, a random roadside stop produced a female Black-chinned Weaver c.20 km south of Capaia (08°31'16.4"S 20°13'22.7"E; 1,010 m). The bird was perched in low scrub within open grassland, and was identified by its bright black-and-yellow plumage, black head and back with yellow half-collar, and black wings with yellow feather fringes.

Shortly before observing the bird MSLM had noted some unusual weaver nests in a nearby tree. On 5 May, while passing this site again, MSLM climbed the tree (Fig. 2), to examine the nests more closely, collecting one for subsequent identification and description (Fig. 3).

In addition to the first sighting of Black-chinned Weaver, on 2 May, MSLM & P. Vaz Pinto found an adult male and female Black-chinned Weaver c.48 km north-northwest of Capaia at 07°55'56.5"S 20°03'28.3"E (990 m) on the road to Lagoa Carumbo. They were feeding in a low bush in open grassland with scattered trees. These records indicate the presence of a (presumably) small and previously unknown population of the species in north-east Angola, and that it may occur continuously in suitable habitat between Congo and the Angolan highlands. These sightings are c.700 km north-east of the known range in Angola (and well below the species' previous altitude range in country) as well as c.600 km south of the single record in DRC.

During the review process, our attention was drawn to a nest of Black-chinned Weaver held in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium (RMCA), for which details appear in the Appendix.

### Notes on weaver nest / colony

The nests observed in Angola appear to be identical to that photographed by J. Caddick in Gabon and very similar to the nest in RMCA (Figs. 4–5). Because Black-chinned Weaver was seen at both sites, the observed nests are distinctive and the surrounding habitat appeared unsuitable for most other weaver species, we are confident that they belong to Black-chinned Weaver. As further evidence that the Angolan nests belong to Black-chinned Weaver, we compared the structure of the collected nest to that in the RMCA and those of

### Legend to figures on opposite page

**Figure 1.** Nest presumably of Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus*, near Lekoni, Gabon, 7 October 2006; note the position of the entrance on the side of the nest towards the top (J. Caddick)

Ninho presumivelmente de tecelão-de-mento-preto *Ploceus nigrimentus*, próximo de Lekoni, Gabão, 7 de outubro de 2006; note-se a posição da entrada lateral do ninho em direcção ao topo (J. Caddick)

**Figure 2.** Colony of ten Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* nests found near Capaia, north-east Angola, 28 April 2010, sited in a tall False Mopane *Guibourtia coleosperma* tree in open grassland with scattered bushes and trees, on deep, sandy Kalahari soils (F. P. D. Cotterill)

Colônia de dez ninhos de tecelão-de-mento-preto *Ploceus nigrimentus* encontrados próximo de Capaia, nordeste de Angola, 28 de abril de 2012, situados numa árvore de Falso Mutiati *Guibourtia coleosperma* em pastagem aberta com arbustos e árvores dispersos, em solos de areias profundas do Calaári (F. P. D. Cotterill)

**Figure 3.** Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* nest, near Capaia, north-east Angola, 5 May 2010; note the identical structure to the nest photographed in Gabon and that collected in Congo-Brazzaville (M. S. L. Mills)

Ninho de tecelão-de-mento-preto *Ploceus nigrimentus*, próximo de Capaia, nordeste de Angola, 5 de maio de 2010; note-se a estrutura idêntica à do ninho fotografado no Gabão e do que foi colhido no Congo-Brazzaville (M. S. L. Mills)

**Figures 4–5.** Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* nest collected in Congo-Brazzaville, 16 December 1990, by R. Demey and held at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium (A. Reygel)

Ninho de tecelão-de-mento-preto *Ploceus nigrimentus* colhido no Congo-Brazzaville, 16 de dezembro de 1990, por R. Demey e mantido no Museu Real para a África Central, Bélgica (A. Reygel)

**Figure 6.** The weaver nest collected near Capaia was constructed of coarse grass and lined with finer grass (M. S. L. Mills)

O ninho de tecelão colhido próximo de Capaia foi construído com capim grosseiro e cosido com ervas mais finas (M. S. L. Mills)

the nine other *Ploceus* species recorded in Lunda Norte, namely Black-necked Weaver *P. nigricollis*, Spectacled Weaver *P. ocularis*, Bocage's Weaver *P. temporalis*, Holub's Golden Weaver *P. xanthops*, Southern Masked Weaver *P. velatus*, Vieillot's Black Weaver *P. nigerrimus*, Village Weaver *P. cucullatus*, Dark-backed Weaver *P. bicolor* and Compact Weaver *P. superciliosus* (Dean 2000),





based on measurements provided by Collias & Collias (1964), Tarboton (2001) and Craig (2004; see Table 2). We also present details of Black-chinned Weaver's hypothesised closest relatives, Baglafaecht Weaver and Bertram's Weaver *P. bertrandi*, these three forming the *P. baglafaecht* superspecies (Fry & Keith 2004).



**Table 2.** Nest dimensions (mm) of the collected nest, the nine other species of *Ploceus* weaver recorded in Lunda Norte province, Angola, and Black-chinned Weaver's *P. nigrimentus* two closest relatives—Baglafaecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafaecht* and Bertram's Weaver *P. bertrandi*. Outer dimensions are given for the length of the longest axis and of the second-longest axis. The range of entrance diameters given are from the narrowest diameter of the smallest entrance to the widest diameter of the largest entrance. Nests are ordered from largest to smallest, based on max. outer diameter.

**Tabela 2.** Dimensões (mm) do ninho colhido, das outras nove espécies de tecelões *Ploceus* registadas na província da Lunda Norte, Angola, e das duas espécies mais próximas do tecelão-de-mento-preto *P. nigrimentus*—tecelão-de-Baglafaecht *Ploceus baglafaecht* e tecelão-de-Bertram *P. bertrandi*. As dimensões exteriores são dadas para o comprimento do eixo mais comprido e para o segundo eixo mais comprido. A variação dos diâmetros de entrada dados são desde o diâmetro mais estreito da entrada menor, ao diâmetro mais aberto da entrada maior. Os ninhos estão ordenados do maior ao menor, baseado nos diâmetros máximos exteriores.

Species	Outer dimensions		Entrance diameter	Tube length	Source
	Longest	Second			
Collected nest	210	170	49–58	0	this study
Baglafaecht Weaver <i>Ploceus baglafaecht</i>	175–205	165–180	45–70	0	Craig 2004
Holub's Golden Weaver <i>P. xanthops</i>	170–190	120–140	60–70	0	Collias & Collias 1964
Bocage's Weaver <i>P. temporalis</i>	170	140	50	30–60	Craig 2004
Village Weaver <i>P. cucullatus</i>	140–170	110–130	35–50	30–80	Craig 2004, Tarboton 2001
Dark-backed Weaver <i>P. bicolor</i>	165	125	-	80–100+	Tarboton 2001
Spectacled Weaver <i>P. ocularis</i>	120–160	125–150	40–70	20–250+	Collias & Collias 1964, Tarboton 2001
Vieillot's Black Weaver <i>P. nigrerrimus</i>	125–150	95–115	40–45	0	Craig 2004
Southern Masked Weaver <i>P. velatus</i>	135–150	110–140	30–35	10–25	Tarboton 2001
Black-necked Weaver <i>P. nigricollis</i>	135	105–125	45–50	100–110	Collias & Collias 1964
Compact Weaver <i>P. superciliosus</i>	120	120	-	0	Craig 2004
Bertram's Weaver <i>P. bertrandi</i>	-	-	-	0	Craig 2004

### Description of nest

Following the nomenclature of Simon & Pacheco (2005), the nest can be described (as is true of all *Ploceus*) as ‘closed / ovoid / pensile’, being a closed nest with height greater than diameter, and suspended, although from the fork of a branch. Following Collias & Collias (1964, see Fig. 14) it is a ‘hooded nest’ with a lateral entrance.

**Location.**—The ten nests, of which one was collected, were placed in the upper and outer branches of a c.12 m-tall False Mopane *Guibourtia coleosperma* tree (Fig. 2). The tree was one of the tallest in the landscape, in open grassland with scattered bushes and trees, on deep, sandy Kalahari soils. The nest collected was placed in the fork of a branch 15 mm in diameter, and located 32 cm from its tip. All ten nests were in good condition, suggesting that all had been built during the previous breeding season.

**Materials.**—The nest was woven mostly from coarse grass, with a slightly ‘untidy’ appearance. It was lined with finer grass, which still possessed a slightly greenish tinge when the nest was collected (Fig. 6). The nest appears to have a ceiling—a layer of grass placed against the roof inside the main structure; this occurs in several weaver nests, to shed rain on the outside of the nest (Collias & Collias 1964).

**Dimensions and structure.**—External: longest axis (top to bottom) = 210 mm, width at entrance = 170 mm, third axis = 170 mm. Entrance: internal height = 58 mm, internal width = 49 mm. Nest chamber: height = 140 mm, width = 80 mm, depth = 80 mm. The circular entrance was placed on the side of the nest (laterally), near the top.

**Comparison.**—The materials used and dimensions and structure of the nest are very similar to those of the Black-chinned Weaver nest at RMCA (see Appendix). The collected nest is exceptionally large, and the largest of all weaver nests to which it was compared (Table 2). The only other species with a nest larger than 200 mm (max. outer diameter) is Baglafaecht Weaver. Its general structure differs markedly from nests of Spectacled Weaver and Dark-backed Weaver, both of which usually possess long entrance tunnels, and those species nest solitarily. Most striking, however, was the position of the entrance on the side (lateral) near the top of the nest and furthest from the ground, whereas the nests of all comparison species have ventral or lateral entrances placed near the base of the nest, closest to and often facing the ground. Further differences are: Holub's Golden Weaver nests usually possess a ‘veranda’ of seed-heads

protruding from an entrance on the underside; Bocage's Weaver nests are suspended over water, or along a river; Village Weaver and Vieillot's Black Weaver construct typical kidney-shaped nests, and usually breed in large colonies; Dark-backed Weaver nests are constructed of tendrils; Southern Masked Weaver builds a typical *Ploceus* kidney-shaped nest; Compact Weaver nests are globular with a side entrance, attached to grass stems and do not breed colonially; and Black-necked Weaver nests are retort-shaped with an entrance tunnel of up to 20 cm.

Based on its structural distinctness, and the fact that two identical nests were found in different countries at sites where Black-chinned Weavers were present, we consider ours to be the first nest description for the species. The collected nest has been deposited in the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK (NHM N/2012.1.1).

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**Appendix.** Description of Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* nest collected by R. Demey on the Batéké Plateau, along the main road from Brazzaville northwards, Congo-Brazzaville, on 16 December 1990 (RMCA no. B2-40-A-1) and measured by M. Louette in 2012.

**Apêndice.** Descrição do ninho de tecelão-de-mento-preto *Ploceus nigrimentus* colhido por R. Demey no Planalto de Batéké, ao longo da estrada principal para norte de Brazzaville, Congo-Brazzaville, a 16 de dezembro de 1990 (RMCA no. B2-40-A-1) e medido por M. Louette em 2012.

**Nest materials.**—Nest woven from coarse grass, possessing a slightly 'untidy' look. Lined with finer grass. Appears to have a ceiling: a layer of grass placed against the roof inside the main structure.

**Dimensions and structure.**—External: longest axis (top to bottom) = 225 mm, width at entrance = 160 mm, third axis = 150 mm. Nest chamber: height = 110 mm, width = 90 mm, depth = 90 mm. Entrance on side of nest (laterally), near the top rather than the base.

# First breeding record of Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* for Mauritania, in Diawling National Park

Nina Seifert<sup>a</sup> and Zein El Abidine Ould Sidaty<sup>b</sup>

**Première preuve de nidification de la Marouette de Baillon *Porzana pusilla* en Mauritanie, dans le Parc National du Diawling.** Un poussin de la Marouette de Baillon *Porzana pusilla* a été capturé dans un marais peu profond de *Sporobolus* / *Scirpus* du Parc National du Diawling, au sud-ouest de la Mauritanie, le 24 janvier 2010. Comme l'oiseau était âgé d'environ 20–25 jours, l'éclosion a dû se produire début janvier 2010. Ceci est la première preuve de nidification de l'espèce pour le pays. La nidification de cette marouette en Afrique de l'Ouest n'a été prouvée qu'en 2009, au nord-ouest du Sénégal et en Gambie.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* is a widespread species with breeding populations in the Palearctic, eastern and southern Africa, and the Oriental and Australasian regions (Cramp & Simmons 1980, Taylor 1996). Little is known about its status and ecology owing to the bird's secretive behaviour. Estimates of European populations are therefore highly tentative (Koshelev 2004) and abundance data are hardly available for Africa (Taylor & van Perlo 1998). European Baillon's Crakes are considered migratory. Winter quarters are assumed to be situated along the

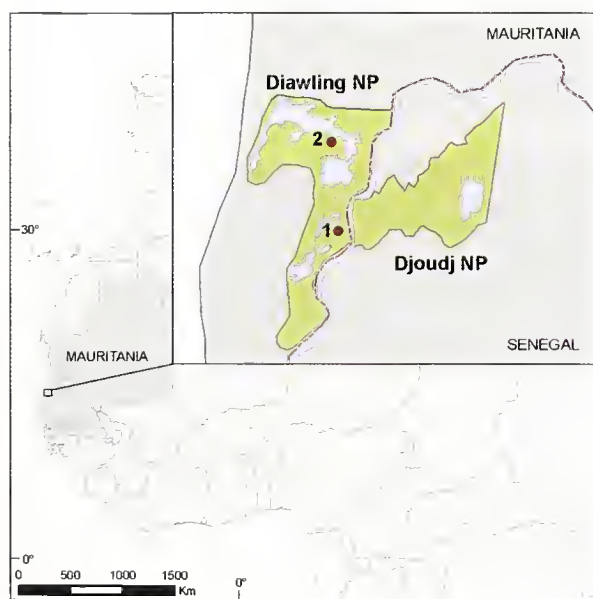
Mediterranean, but several records of presumed Palearctic migrants during spring and autumn in desert oases indicate trans-Saharan movements (e.g. Algeria: Isenmann *et al.* 2000; Libya: Moltoni 1928; North Sudan: Nikolaus 1981). Furthermore, sporadic observations in Senegal and Somalia during autumn and winter support the hypothesis of wintering sites south of the Sahara, as have been reported for two other Palearctic crake species, Spotted *P. porzana* and Little Crakes *P. parva* (Archer & Godman 1937, Roux & Morel 1964, Cramp & Simmons 1980). For Mauritania, the species was assumed to occur based on records on the Senegalese side of the Senegal Delta (Lamarche 1988).

An expedition by the BirdLife International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team (AWCT) found a considerable number of Baillon's Crakes within Djoudj National Park and its vicinity, north-west Senegal, in the winter of 2007 (Salewski *et al.* 2009). Following this discovery, the status and size of this newly discovered population is being investigated, as part of a Ph.D. project under the auspices of the Ornithological Station 'Hiddensee', Germany.

In spring 2009, breeding of Baillon's Crake in Senegal (in Djoudj National Park) and the Gambia (in a wetland near Pakali Ba) was established for the first time (Seifert *et al.* 2012). Given the proximity of similar habitats in Diawling National Park, on the east side of the Senegal River in southern Mauritania, it was suspected that the species might breed there too.

## Material and Methods

During an AWCT expedition on 23–27 January 2010, birds were trapped at two sites within Diawling National Park (Fig. 1): the Bassin du



**Figure 1.** Location of Diawling National Park in the Senegal Delta, south-west Mauritania. Numbers indicate the catching sites: 1) Bassin du Bell and 2) Bassin du Tianbrank.

Carte de la région indiquant le Parc National du Diawling, delta du Sénégal, sud-ouest de la Mauritanie. Les numéros indiquent les sites de capture : 1) Bassin du Bell et 2) Bassin du Tianbrank.



Bell (16°22'48.2"N 16°20'30.4"W) and the Bassin du Tianbrank (16°28'12.5"N 16° 21'18.1"W). Ten fall traps (Bub 1995) were installed along a transect line and the shoreline of small ponds interspersed within the *Scirpus maritimus* / *S. littoralis* marshes. Trapping was undertaken from sunrise to midday (07.00–14.00 hrs).

## Results and Discussion

We caught one Baillon's Crake chick in the Bassin du Bell on 24 January. Another bird of unknown age was flushed close to Mirador Tichilitt, on the shoreline of the Bassin du Tianbrank, on 27 January. The chick was estimated to be 20–25 days old (e.g. remains of black downy feathers still visible, bill pale yellow with blackish base, and initiating primary growth; Cramp & Simmons 1980, Taylor & van Perlo 1998, Seifert *et al.* 2012) and thus probably hatched in early January (Figs. 2–3).

This is the first proven breeding record of Baillon's Crake for Mauritania (Isenmann *et al.* 2010). (Although Isenmann *et al.* (2010) mention, in French, that 'poussins' (plural) were found in January 2010, there was only a single chick.)

Baillon's Crakes are confined to wetland habitats with dense vegetation and rather shallow water levels (Szabó 1975, Taylor & van Perlo 1998). The vast *Scirpus maritimus* / *Sporobolus* areas in the Basin du Bell and extensive *S. maritimus* stands on the southern shore of the Diawling constitute optimal habitats for the species. At the time of the AWCT expedition, most of the water within the park had evaporated, substantially diminishing the extent of suitable habitat. We therefore expect that Baillon's Crake occurs at a higher density earlier in the season when water levels are higher and the marshes inundated. The Baillon's Crake chick caught in the Bassin du Bell was unable to fly and thus leave the area, as the adults probably did when the site became dry some weeks previously. Water levels in the park usually peak around 15 October when the sluices are closed, after being open from the onset of the wet season in July. Vegetation reaches its maximum extent in late September / October (I. Ndaye pers. comm.). The breeding period of Baillon's Crake may therefore commence in early autumn. A Baillon's Crake caught on 24 December 2009 near the 'Ouvrage du Bell' (J.

Foucher pers. comm.) and identified as a subadult was probably from a first brood. However, it cannot be excluded that this bird might have come from a late brood in, e.g. Spain, and was overwintering in Mauritania, as nothing is known concerning the timing of moult in juvenile Baillon's Crakes. Otherwise, the chick caught during our expedition must have originated from a later brood, begun in late November / early December within the national park.



**Figure 2.** Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* chick, Bassin du Bell, Diawling National Park, Mauritania, 24 January 2010 (V. Salewski)

Poussin de la Marouette de Baillon *Porzana pusilla*, Bassin du Bell, Parc National du Diawling, Mauritanie, 24 janvier 2010 (V. Salewski)



**Figure 3.** Wing of Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* chick showing visible primary growth, Bassin du Bell, Diawling National Park, Mauritania, 24 January 2010 (V. Salewski)

L'aile du poussin de la Marouette de Baillon *Porzana pusilla* montrant les rémiges primaires encore en mue, Bassin du Bell, Parc National du Diawling, Mauritanie, 24 janvier 2010 (V. Salewski)

The results of trapping in Djoudj National Park, Senegal, in spring 2009 and 2010 suggest a similarly timed breeding period (Seifert *et al.* 2012). As the vast *Scirpus* / *Sporobolus* marshes on the western and eastern sides of the Senegal River belong to the same system, Baillon's Crakes recorded on the Mauritanian and Senegalese sides can be considered a single population. Hence, conservation activities such as water management in both national parks, Diawling and Djoudj, should be coordinated.

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# First record of Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus* for Ghana

Glen Valentine

**Première observation de l'Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus* au Ghana.** Un Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus* a été observé le 13 décembre 2009 au Parc National de Mole, au centre-nord du Ghana. C'est la première donnée pour le Ghana, d'une espèce rarement observée en Afrique occidentale.

On 13 December 2009, at around 15.00 hrs on a partially cloudy afternoon, two Ashanti African Tours guides (W. Apraku and F. Ntakor), six tour participants and I were birding near the entrance gate in Mole National Park (c.09°16'N 01°51'W) when I spotted a Wahlberg's (Brown-backed) Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus* in a small mixed-species flock. The bird was perched motionless and upright in a sparsely vegetated tree c.5 m off the ground and c.40 m away. I immediately recognised the species, which I am very familiar with from South Africa, where it is fairly common in KwaZulu-Natal and elsewhere. The bird flew a few metres to another perch, permitting observation of its distinctive white outer tail feathers. It was a small, mostly brown, flycatcher-like honeyguide. The bill was sharp, fairly short and fine (flycatcher-like), the back was all dull brown with mostly brown underparts, and a partially whitish lower belly. Unfortunately, the bird flew again and we were unable to re-locate it. No other member of the group had a convincing view, and we were unable to acquire photographs.

Thoma (2012) reported the first observations in Mali, and discussed the few other West African records. Although Thoma (2012) suggested the possibility that this species is a migrant in West

Africa, it seems more likely to be an easily overlooked bird that is very thinly distributed. The habitat at Mole, and that in which most other West African records of this species have been made, is dry woodland containing many of the tree species characteristic of Sudanian woodland (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2008).

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# First records for South Sudan of African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* and White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus*, and first sighting of Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*

Mark Mallalieu

**Premières données pour le Soudan du Sud du Baza coucou *Aviceda cuculoides*, de l'Hypolaïs icterine *Hippolais icterina* et de l'Euplecte à ailes blanches *Euplectes albonotatus*, et première observation du Faucon d'Éléonore *Falco eleonora*.** Trois espèces nouvelles pour le Soudan du Sud sont documentées, ainsi qu'une espèce dont la présence dans le pays était précédemment établie uniquement par télémétrie par satellite. Un Baza coucou *Aviceda cuculoides* a été observé à 45 km au nord-ouest de Nimule (03°54'N 31°46'E), Équatoria Oriental, le 11 mars 2012, et un autre près de Juba (04°52'N 31°38'E), Équatoria Central, le 25 mars 2012. Un Faucon d'Éléonore *Falco eleonora* adulte de forme sombre a été vu à environ 30 km au sud-est de Juba (c.04°36'N 31°46'E) le 24 avril 2011 ; des données télémétriques par satellite avaient démontré que cette espèce survolait le Soudan du Sud. Le même jour une Hypolaïs icterine *Hippolais icterina* a été observée à environ 25 km au sud-est de Juba (c.04°38'N 31°44'E). Deux ou trois Euplectes à ailes blanches *Euplectes albonotatus* mâles en plumage nuptial ont été observés à environ 5 km au sud-est de Juba (04°47'N 31° 36'E) le 28 juillet 2012, et deux de plus à environ 7 km de la première observation le 4 août 2012.

**D**uring my stay in South Sudan, from mid-September 2010 to early September 2012, I observed four species not included in Nikolaus's 'Birds of South Sudan' (1989) or in the ABC's checklist of the birds of South Sudan, published online following the country's independence in July 2011 (Atkinson *et al.* 2012). These are thus additions to the country's avifauna.

## **African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides***

On 11 March 2012, I was watching birds on the banks of the White Nile (03°54'N 31°46'E) in Eastern Equatoria State c.45 km north-west of Nimule and close to the border with Uganda, in narrow riverine woodland backed by scrub and cultivation. At approximately 08.25 hrs, I saw a raptor that I could not immediately identify fly across the river towards me. Although light conditions were poor, I took several photographs that subsequently enabled me to identify the bird as an immature African Cuckoo Hawk (Fig. 1).

The bird flew in a direct purposeful manner and was about the size of a Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*, with a rather small bill, a fairly long, narrow tail, and rather broad wings with 'fingered' primaries. It was largely earth-brown above, with off-whitish underparts and undersides to the flight feathers. The throat appeared whitish,



**Figure 1.** Immature African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*, 45 km north of Nimule, Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan, 11 March 2012 (Mark Mallalieu)

Baza coucou *Aviceda cuculoides* immature, 45 km au nord de Nimule, Équatoria Oriental, Soudan du Sud, 11 mars 2012 (Mark Mallalieu)

the breast and flanks had distinct brown blotches, and the ventral region appeared unmarked. The underwing had a broad dark grey or brownish-grey trailing edge, and two narrow more or less parallel lines of a similar colour running centrally along the flight feathers, forming more irregular barring on the primaries. The pattern of the underwing-coverts was not noted in the field,





**Figure 2.** Adult African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*, Gondokoro Island, Juba, Central Equatoria State, South Sudan, 25 March 2012 (Mark Mallalieu)  
Baza coucou *Aviceda cuculoides* adulte, île de Gondokoro, Juba, Équatoria Central, Soudan du Sud, 25 mars 2012 (Mark Mallalieu)

but appears to be rather uniform and possibly paler than the trailing edge to the wings in the photographs, which also reveal the tail to be pale grey or brown below with two broad darker bars and a broad dark terminal band just discernible. Fig. 1 also shows the suggestion of a crest, a very pale malar stripe, yellowish cere and rather pale eyes. Leg colour was not noted.

Immature African Cuckoo Hawks should possess a whitish supercilium, which I did not observe, nor is this feature visible in the photographs. However, the features that were noted are consistent only with this species (Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002). This is the first record for South Sudan. Nikolaus (1989) suggested that the species might occur and the distribution map in Brown *et al.* (1983) includes south-western South Sudan.

Two weeks later, on 25 March 2012, with R. Trewby, I photographed an adult African Cuckoo Hawk on Gondokoro Island (04°52'N 31°38'E), adjacent to Juba on the White Nile in Central Equatoria State (Fig. 2). This bird was seen for c.5 minutes in flight and was unmistakable. The uniform rufous underwing-coverts indicate that it was of the nominate subspecies *A. c. cuculoides*.

#### **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae*

On 24 April 2011, at c.08.45 hrs, T. Jenner and I were c.30 km south-east of Juba along the road to Nimule (c.04°36'N 31°46'E), Central Equatoria State. The weather was excellent, with a cloudless



**Figure 3.** Adult dark-morph Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*, 30 km south-east of Juba, Central Equatoria State, South Sudan, 24 April 2011 (Mark Mallalieu)  
Faucon d'Éléonore *Falco eleonorae* adulte de forme sombre, 30 km au sud-est de Juba, Équatoria Central, Soudan du Sud, 24 avril 2011 (Mark Mallalieu)

sky and little wind. We noted several European Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* migrating north-west and decided to remain and see whether other birds of prey were also moving. Soon, we found a single falcon *Falco* sp., perhaps 1 km distant, flying at c.300 m altitude. The bird soared frequently as it moved gradually north-west. Although the image is very small in the photographs (Fig. 3), from these we were able to identify the bird as an adult dark-morph Eleonora's Falcon on the basis of the rather uniform grey coloration with much darker underwing-coverts, combined with the long wings and long tail (Forsman 1999). Sooty Falcon *F. concolor* shows little or no contrast on the underwing between the coverts and flight feathers (Forsman 1999). Grey Kestrel *F. ardosiacus* has barred flight feathers and a less elegant, shorter winged appearance (pers. obs.). W. S. Clark (*in litt.* 2011) subsequently confirmed the identification.

Nikolaus (1989) listed Eleonora's Falcon as likely to occur in South Sudan. Satellite telemetry has since confirmed that the species does overfly the country en route to and from the wintering grounds (mainly in Madagascar): at least eight individuals crossed South Sudan on their southbound migration and at least three on their return (Gschweng *et al.* 2008, López-López *et al.* 2009, Hellenic Ornithological Society 2012). One southbound bird passed just c.100 km east of the site of the April 2011 record,



**Figures 4–5.** Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, 25 km south-east of Juba, Central Equatoria State, South Sudan, 24 April 2011 (Mark Mallalieu)

Hypolaïs icterine *Hippolais icterina*, 25 km au sud-est de Juba, Équatoria Central, Soudan du Sud, 24 avril 2011 (Mark Mallalieu)

whilst two adult females that left their wintering grounds in Madagascar on 19 and 23 April, moved north through Kenya and Ethiopia, then west-northwest across South Sudan c.500 km north-east of the sighting reported here. It seems highly probable that there will be further sight records of Eleonora's Falcon from South Sudan. In good weather many birds may migrate at high altitude and thus be very hard or impossible to see. However, they are likely to be brought down lower during heavy rains, which can occur from late April.

#### **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*

Also on 24 April 2011, at about 16.00 hrs and c.25 km south-east of Juba in Central Equatoria State (c.04°38'N 31°44'E), T. Jenner and I were alerted by our driver, B. O. Peter, to an emergence of flying ants around a large fig tree *Ficus* sp. that was attracting many small birds. The most obvious were weavers *Ploceus* spp., but Black-billed Barber *Lybius guifsobalito* and Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* were also present. I noticed a warbler that I thought was probably an Icterine Warbler. Closer observation and subsequent examination of photographs (Figs. 4–5) confirmed the identification. The bird appeared slightly larger than a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, with long wings, a long pinkish-orange bill and greyish legs. The upperparts were difficult to see as the bird was feeding high in the fig tree, but appeared olive-green. The underparts were pale lemon-yellow from throat to vent. It had a bland-

faceted appearance with a hint of a supercilium in front of the eye and a vague milky yellow eye-ring. Given the views and the detail in the photographs, there is no possibility of confusion with any other African or Palearctic species. Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta* has shorter wings and is highly unlikely to occur in South Sudan as it winters in West Africa (Urban *et al.* 1997). This is the first record for South Sudan, and again was anticipated by Nikolaus (1989).

#### **White-winged Widowbird** *Euplectes albonotatus*

On 28 July 2012, I was birdwatching just east of the White Nile at Juba, c.5 km by road from Karpeto, Central Equatoria State (04°47'N 31°36'E), in park-like open *Acacia* savannah with long grass that was attracting flocks of Northern Red *Euplectes franciscanus* and Black-winged Bishops *E. hordeaceus*. Among these, I noticed a bird similar in size to the bishops, but mainly black, with a flash of white in the wing and a long tail, which I identified as a male White-winged Widowbird in breeding plumage (Fig. 6). I remained in the area for c.30 minutes and observed 2–3 males, but no females, although these could easily have been overlooked. The birds possessed the cinnamon-rufous shoulder patches of the subspecies *E. a. eques* (Craig 2010).

On 4 August 2012, I encountered two further males in breeding plumage east of the White Nile in similar habitat and within 7 km of the first records. I found no evidence of breeding.





**Figure 6.** White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus* near Juba, Central Equatoria State, South Sudan, 28 July 2012 (Mark Mallalieu)

Euplecte à ailes blanches *Euplectes albonotatus* près de Juba, Équatoria Central, Soudan du Sud, 28 juillet 2012 (Mark Mallalieu)

Although Nikolaus (1987) mentioned that White-winged Widowbird is 'rare along the Uganda border' and marked its occurrence in one-degree square 4/32, he subsequently omitted it from his species list for South Sudan stating that it 'may occur in tall bushed grassland along the Uganda border' (Nikolaus 1989). *E. a. eques* occurs locally in the Jebel Marra region of Sudan (Nikolaus 1987) so the reference in Craig (2010) to its occurrence in west and south Sudan refers to that population and presumably to Nikolaus' original assertion that it occurs in South Sudan (Nikolaus 1987).

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# First Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* for Namibia

Simon Woolley

**Première mention du Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* pour la Namibie.** Le 21 août 2011 un Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* a été photographié à Rundu, au nord de la Namibie. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays. L'aire d'hivernage de cette espèce, qui niche de l'Alaska au Canada, s'étend du sud des États Unis jusqu'en Amérique du Sud. En Afrique, des occasionnels ont été notés en Afrique de l'Ouest, en Zambie et en Afrique australe.

**O**n the morning of 21 August 2011, I visited Rundu Sewage Works, Kavango Region, northern Namibia (17°53'22"S 19°48'02"E), along with my wife, Julia Casson, Rainer Summers from Rockjumper Birding Tours and 14 teenage members of the Winchester College (UK) Natural History Society. Among the various commoner birds present, a calling wader attracted my attention, and I saw a medium-sized, greyish *Tringa* with bright yellow legs and a squared-off white rump patch fly past. I initially considered Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*, on account of the trisyllabic call, very similar to a Common Greenshank's *T. nebularia*. However, closer inspection of the bird, which was now feeding with a Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, and input from birding friends via SMS, enabled us to eliminate that possibility. Indeed, the generally slight build, the fine, straight and almost all-black bill, only slightly longer than the head, and the dark secondaries visible in flight, confirmed that this was a Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* (Figs. 1–2). We aged the bird as an adult based on the heavy wear to various major feather tracts and the smattering of dark feathers on the upperparts.

This is the first record for Namibia (Hockey *et al.* 2005; T. Hardaker *in litt.* 2011). Lesser Yellowlegs breeds from Alaska to south-central Canada and moves south from mid July to winter across the southern USA through Central and South America (van Gils & Wiersma 1996). It is a vagrant to sub-Saharan Africa, with records from Senegal, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia and southern Africa (Urban *et al.* 1986, Borrow & Demey 2001, 2011, Hockey *et al.* 2005). There are just six previous records from the southern African subregion: one from Zimbabwe (Harare, December 1979), one from Botswana (Moremi Game Reserve, April 2009) and four from South Africa (Berg River estuary, Velddrif, Western Cape, August 1983, probably a juvenile, present for at least 16 months, and January 2000; Sappi wetlands, Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, December 2008; and Woodbourne Pan, Knysna, Western Cape, November 2010) (Hockey *et al.* 2005; T. Hardaker *in litt.* 2011).

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**Figures 1–2.** Lesser Yellowlegs / Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes*, Rundu Sewage Works, Namibia, 21 August 2011 (Simon Woolley)



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First breeding record of Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* for Tunisia

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**Première donnée de nidification de la Bergeronnette des ruisseaux *Motacilla cinerea* en Tunisie.** Un nid de la Bergeronnette des ruisseaux *Motacilla cinerea* a été trouvé le 18 mai 2012 au centre de vacances d'Aïn Soltane, Jendouba, Tunisie. Il s'agit de la première preuve de reproduction de l'espèce dans le pays.

In the Maghreb, Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* is known to breed in Morocco and Algeria (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Thévenot *et al.* 2003). In Tunisia, proof of breeding was lacking, although the observation of a pair uttering alarm-calls near a stream in the Kroumirie Mountains,

in the north-west, in April 2000, suggested the species had a nest there (Isenmann *et al.* 2005).  
During 8–21 May 2012, while staying at the holiday centre of Aïn Soltane, Governorat of Jendouba, north-western Tunisia, at the edge of El Feija National Park, we regularly observed



**Figure 1.** Adult male Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Aïn Soltane, Tunisia, 16 May 2012 (Georges Oliosio)  
Bergeronnette des ruisseaux *Motacilla cinerea* mâle, Aïn Soltane, Tunisie, 16 mai 2012 (Georges Oliosio)



**Figure 2.** Nest of Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Aïn Soltane, Tunisia, 18 May 2012 (Georges Oliosio)  
Nid de Bergeronnette des ruisseaux *Motacilla cinerea*, Aïn Soltane, Tunisie, 18 mai 2012 (Georges Oliosio)

a pair of Grey Wagtails uttering alarm-calls and carrying food. We eventually mist-netted the male (Fig. 1). On 18 May, we found the pair's rather voluminous nest under the beams supporting the roof of a house (Fig. 2); it contained at least three downy chicks. The staff of the holiday centre subsequently indicated a second nest, placed in the same situation, but in another building, that had held a first clutch earlier in the season.

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## Second observation of Common Crane *Grus grus* in Senegal

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**Deuxième observation d'une Grue cendrée *Grus grus* au Sénégal.** Une Grue cendrée *Grus grus* a été observée au Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj, Sénégal, le 22 janvier 2012. Ceci constitue la deuxième donnée sur ce site et pour le pays de cette espèce occasionnelle paléarctique, qui normalement hiverne au nord du Sahara.

On 22 January 2012 we observed an adult Common Crane *Grus grus* in Djoudj National Park, northern Senegal, on a sandy area within temporarily flooded marshes near Grand Lac (c.16°26'32"N 16°11'37"W). The bird was accompanied by two Black Crowned Cranes *Balearica pavonina* and was identified by its mainly grey plumage lacking the white wing panel and distinctive head pattern of Black Crowned Crane (Figs. 1–2). Size, lack of white elongated plumes on the head, and black neck feathers

not reaching the breast distinguished it from Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*.

This is the second observation of Common Crane in Senegal, the first having been made at about the same locality in the previous non-breeding season, in March 2010 (Seward & Blesley 2010), which suggests that the same individual was concerned. Common Crane breeds in the Palearctic and western populations migrate as far south as the North African Mediterranean region during the non-breeding season (Bauer *et*



**Figures 1–2.** Common Crane *Grus grus* accompanied by two Black Crowned Cranes *Balearica pavonina*, Djoudj National Park, Senegal, 22 January 2012 (Volker Salewski)

Grue cendrée *Grus grus* accompagnée de deux Grues couronnées *Balearica pavonina*, Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj, Sénégal, 22 janvier 2012 (Volker Salewski)



al. 2005). In sub-Saharan West Africa it is a rare vagrant, recorded only from northern Mauritania (Baie de l'Étoile/Nouadhibou, 30–35 individuals between 20 December 1981 and 8 February 1982: Isenmann *et al.* 2010), west Niger (Mare de Kero, two, 27 February 2002: NiBDaB 2012) and north-eastern Nigeria (Hadejia wetlands and oases near the Niger border: five sightings between December and March, 1989–1991: Elgood *et al.* 1994).

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## Little-known African bird:

### Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii*—an Angolan near-endemic

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#### O pouco conhecido beija-flor de Bocage *Nectarinia bocagii*: uma espécie quase endêmica de Angola.

O beija-flor de Bocage *Nectarinia bocagii* é uma espécie pouco conhecida e praticamente endêmica da cintura de matas de *Brachystegia* do planalto angolano. Com base em 42 espécimes angolanas que consegui localizar, a sua distribuição em Angola está mais ou menos restrita ao planalto ocidental entre os 1.420 e os 1.770 m de altitude. No entanto existem três registos de localidades afastadas desta faixa, a norte e a este, e a mais baixas altitudes (1.150–1.260 m), que sugerem que a sua distribuição possa ser muito mais ampla. A espécie não está bem representada nos guias de campo e outros livros; é preciso cuidado especial para a não confundir com a sub-espécie *gadawi* do beija-flor-bronzeado *N. kilimensis* com que co-ocorre. O beija-flor de Bocage apresenta um brilho azul-púrpura conspicuo sobre a sua cabeça e costas, distinto do brilho verde-bronzeado do beija-flor-bronzeado. Em certas condições de luz, ambas as espécies parecem pretas. O beija-flor de Bocage tem preferência por zonas abertas ao longo dos rios que atravessam matas de *Brachystegia* e alimenta-se de néctar e invertebrados. Tanto o beija-flor-bronzeado como o beija-flor-acobreado *Cinnyris cupreus* podem ocorrer no mesmo habitat dentro da área de distribuição do beija-flor de Bocage.

**Summary.** The little-known Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii* is near-endemic to the *Brachystegia* woodland belt of the Angolan plateau. Based on the 42 Angolan museum specimens I traced, its range in the country is more or less confined to the western highlands at altitudes between 1,420 m and 1,770 m. However, three records are from distant localities to the north and east of this, and from lower altitudes (1,150–1,260 m), hinting at a much wider distribution. The species is misleadingly illustrated in various field guides and books; care should be taken when separating it from the similar Bronzy Sunbird *N. kilimensis*. It is best distinguished from the sympatric *gadawi* subspecies of Bronzy Sunbird by the conspicuous purplish-blue sheen over its head and mantle, whereas Bronzy Sunbird has a bronzy-green sheen. Under certain light conditions both species can appear black. Bocage's Sunbird favours open areas along rivers within *Brachystegia* woodland and feeds on nectar and invertebrates. Both Bronzy Sunbird and Copper Sunbird *Cinnyris cupreus* may occur in the same habitat within its range.

**T**he little-known Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii* (sometimes incorrectly spelled *N. bocagei*) is a *Brachystegia* woodland endemic (Benson & Irwin 1966) confined to Angola and a small area of south-western Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Schouteden 1959, Dean 2000, Fry 2000). Few people have observed it in life and field guides do a poor job of illustrating and describing it. Here I summarise specimen information pertaining to Angola and review available literature, augmenting this with my own observations in order to update our knowledge of the species and elucidate the key field identification features. I also provide an annotated bibliography for the species that includes a listing of morphological measurements from primary / known sources alone.

#### Angolan specimens in collections

I interrogated various online museum catalogues and databases including the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF; <http://www.gbif.org/>) and ORNIS (<http://www.ornisnet.org/>), where possible verifying information through direct correspondence with museum staff, contacted other museums directly, and personally visited the Lubango Bird Skin Collection (LBSC) to compile a list of available specimens of Bocage's Sunbird from Angola, based on Dean (2000) (see Appendix A for a list of museums checked). Martim Melo (pers. comm.) provided details of the specimen in the Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical in Lisbon (IICT).

I traced a total of 42 Angolan specimens of Bocage's Sunbird (Table 1) of which 18 are listed by Dean (2000). In addition, there are also two

**Table 1.** Details of the 42 Angola museum specimens of Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii* located during this study, listed in chronological order of collection. The first specimen is listed as the holotype, and the following two form part of the same series. For locality details, see Table 2.

**Tabela 1.** Detalhes dos 42 espécimes museológicos do beija-flor-de-Bocage *Nectarinia bocagii*, localizados durante este estudo, listados por ordem cronológica da coleção. O primeiro exemplar está listado como holótipo, e os dois seguintes formam parte da mesma série. Para detalhes da localização, ver Tabela 2.

AMNH = American Museum of Natural History, New York; BMNH = Natural History Museum, Tring; CMNH = Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh; IICT = Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Lisbon; LACM = Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, Los Angeles; LBSC = Lubango Bird Skin Collection; MCZ = Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard; NMZA = National Museum of Zambia, Livingstone; YPM = Yale University Peabody Museum, New Haven.

Year	Month	Day	Locality	Museum	Specimen no.	Collector	Sex	Age
1878	9-11		Caconda	BMNH	1895.9.9.14*	Anchieta	M	Ad.
<1880			Caconda	BMNH	1895.5.1.2284	Anchieta	M	Ad.
<1880			Caconda	BMNH	1895.9.9.5	Anchieta	F	
1904	9	16	Losili River	AMNH	690559	Ansorge	M	
1904	9	16	Losili River	AMNH	690560	Ansorge	M	
1904	11	9	Cuquema	AMNH	690562	Ansorge	F	
1904	12	8	Cuquema	AMNH	690561	Ansorge	M	Juv.
1904	12	18	Cuima	AMNH	690558	Ansorge	M	
1928	6	11	Chipepe	MCZ	165932	Koester	M	Ad.
1931	1	12	Chitau	CMNH	671	Boulton & Boulton		
1931	1	24	Chitau	AMNH	268359	Boulton & Boulton	M	
1931	1	24	Chitau	CMNH	109118	Boulton & Boulton	M	Ad.
1931	1	25	Chitau	CMNH	109135	Boulton & Boulton	M	Ad.
1931	1	31	Chitau	CMNH	1135	Boulton	F	Ad.
1931	2	13	Mount Moco	CMNH	109296	Boulton & Boulton	M	Ad.
1931	2	14	Mount Moco	CMNH	109306	Boulton & Boulton	M	Ad.
1931	2	26	Huambo	BMNH	1931.12.21.118	Lynes	F	Ad.
1945	7	12	Tchicala	LACM	63055	Mendes Costa	M	Ad.
1945	7	12	Tchicala	LACM	63056	Mendes Costa	M	Ad.
1945	7	13	Tchicala	LACM	63057	Mendes Costa	F	Ad.
1945	7	25	Londumbali	LACM	63054	Mendes Costa	M	Ad.
1957	8	13	Tchicala	BMNH	1957.35.552	Williams	F	Juv.
1957	8	13	Tchicala	BMNH	1957.35.553	Williams	F	Ad.
1957	8	13	Tchicala	BMNH	1957.35.554	Williams	F	Juv.
1957	8	14	Tchicala	BMNH	1957.35.555	Williams	F	Juv.
1957	8	25	Londumbali	BMNH	1957.35.551	Williams	M	Ad.
1957	10	18	Posto de Umpulo	IICT	CZ000006428	Frade	M	Ad.
1957	12	16	Cambundi Catembo: 25 km NW of	YPM	78809	Heinrich	M	Ad.
1958	1	18	Cacolo: 40 km E of	YPM	78808	Heinrich	M	Ad.
1960	7	26	Tchicala	LACM	63058	Mendes Costa	F	Ad.
1964	6	2	Calpiongo	LBSC	7630	Loureiro	M	Ad.
1964	6	22	Mount Moco	LBSC	8329	Loureiro	M	Ad.
1964	12	23	Ninda	NMZA	6022	Hart	M	Ad.
1967	10	8	Uaba	LBSC	20479	Samahina	M	Ad.
1968	10	21	Goguê	LBSC	25901	Mumputu	F	Ad.
1968	10	22	Cativa	LBSC	25950	Ramos	M	Ad.
1968	10	22	Cativa	LBSC	25941	Ramos	M	Ad.
1972	10	2	Cachingues	LBSC	36166	Sousa	M	Ad.
1972	10	6	Cachingues	LBSC	36283	Sousa	M	Ad.
1972	10	7	Cachingues	LBSC	36408	Rosa Pinto	M	Ad.
1972	10	24	Cachingues	LBSC	36697	Felisberto	M	Ad.
1972	11	14	Andulo	LBSC	37359	Sousa	M	Ad.



eggs at BMNH (E/1931.12.21.18–19) collected by H. Lynes & J. Vincent at Huambo town on 26 February 1931 (Cheke & Mann 2001, Dean & Milton 2007). The largest series of Angolan skins are 11 in the LBSC, nine at BMNH and six each at AMNH and CMNH (all museum acronyms are explained in Table 1). Carreira (1990) mentions a specimen at the Museu Zoológico da Universidade de Coimbra in Coimbra (MZUC),

but photographs of this individual revealed it to be a male Bronzy Sunbird *N. kilimensis* (pers. obs.).

### Overview of collecting in Angola

The first specimen of Bocage's Sunbird, an adult male, was collected in the Caconda area by José de Anchieta during September–November 1877 (see Table 2 for locality details). He sent this specimen to the Lisbon museum where José Vincente



**Figure 1.** Side-by-side comparison of breeding-plumage males of Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii* and the Angolan endemic (*gadowi*) subspecies of Bronzy Sunbird *N. kilimensis*, housed in the Lubango Bird Skin Collection. Under certain light conditions both species can appear all black. It is the colour of the gloss—purplish-blue in Bocage's Sunbird and bronzey-green in Bronzy Sunbird—most visible on the upperparts, that best distinguishes the two species. In general Bronzy Sunbird has a longer tail, but moulting or fresh plumage birds may have a shorter tail, like Bocage's Sunbird (Michael Mills)

Comparação lado-a-lado da plumagem nupcial de machos de beija-flor-de-Bocage *Nectarinia bocagii* e da subespécie endémica de Angola *gadowi* de beija-flor-bronzeado *N. kilimensis*. Estes exemplares fazem parte da Colecção de Aves do Lubango. Sob determinadas condições de luminosidade, ambas as espécies podem parecer completamente pretas. É a coloração do brilho reflexo—púrpura-azul no beija-flor-de-Bocage e bronze-esverdeado no beija-flor-bronzeado—principalmente visível na parte superior, o que melhor distingue estas duas espécies. Geralmente, o beija-flor-bronzeado tem uma cauda mais comprida, mas aves com plumagem jovem ou durante a muda podem apresentar uma cauda mais curta, como no beija-flor-de-Bocage (Michael Mills)



**Figure 2.** The first-known photograph of a live Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii*, illustrating the diagnostic, strong purplish gloss that is usually visible over the head and back, Huambo, Angola, July 2010 (A. Vaz)

A primeira fotografia conhecida de um beija-flor-de-Bocage *Nectarinia bocagii*, ilustrando o forte brilho púrpura que é diagnóstico e geralmente visível sobre a cabeça e no dorso, Huambo, Angola, julho 2010 (A. Vaz)

Barboza du Bocage (1878a) identified it as Tacazze Sunbird *N. tacazze*. However, Barboza du Bocage subsequently sent it to George Ernest Shelley at the British Museum for critical examination, and in his monograph of sunbirds Shelley (1879) described a new species '*Nectarinia bocagii* Bocage's Sunbird' based on this specimen, named in honour of Barboza du Bocage, the man considered the father of Angolan ornithology (Barboza du Bocage 1878b, Beolens & Watkins 2003). At the time of its description the type specimen was deposited in the 'Lisbon Museum' (Shelley 1879).

By 1880 Anchieta had collected and sent to Lisbon five specimens from Caconda, one of which was a female (Barboza du Bocage 1880). Barboza du Bocage at this time appeared to be unconvinced by Shelley's (1879) conclusion that it was a new species, stating that he considered it to be identical to Tacazze Sunbird. Later, probably in 1895 (according to the specimen registration



**Figure 3.** Male Bronzy Sunbird *Nectarinia kilimensis gadowi*, Mount Moco, Angola, July 2010; the bronzy-green gloss on the upperparts is clearly visible, but note that this individual has a relatively short tail, as is typical for Bocage's Sunbird *N. bocagii*. (U. Franke)

Macho de beija-flor-bronzeado *Nectarinia kilimensis gadowi*, Morro Moco, Angola, julho 2010; o brilho bronze-esverdeado na parte superior é claramente visível, mas é de notar que este indivíduo tem uma cauda relativamente curta, o que é típico do beija-flor-de-Bocage *N. bocagii*. (U. Franke)

numbers), the type specimen along with another male and female specimen were presented to Shelley by Barboza du Bocage; these specimens are now in the BMNH (British Museum of Natural History 2001) while the other specimens in Lisbon (Museu Bocage) were presumably destroyed in the fire in March 1978 (Roselaar 2003). Interestingly, the female plumage remained undescribed for almost 80 years!

Almost 25 years after Anchieta's original series, W. J. Ansorge collected five specimens in the Huambo / Bié highlands in 1904 (Table 1). The next substantial series was obtained by W. R. & J. Boulton, who collected seven specimens during 1931, also from the Huambo / Bié highlands. Thereafter, in 1945 A. Mendes Costa added four specimens and in 1957 J. G. Williams added five to the growing tally, all from the Huambo Highlands. The female was finally described in 1959 (Schouteden 1959), based on the first specimens from DRC (Wille 1964). Finally, between 1964 and 1972, various staff members of the Instituto de Investigação Científica de Angola collected 11 specimens held at the LBSC. Among the eight other specimens, however, are the most interesting records, geographically. G. Heinrich and R. C. Hart collected the species well north



**Table 2.** List of known localities from which Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagii* has been collected in Angola, ordered from north to south. Almost all are within a relatively small area in the highlands of Huambo, Huíla, Kwanza Sul and Bié. Cambudi Catembo, Cacolo and Ninda, however, lie a long way outside of this area, hinting at a much wider distribution for the species. Details of Losili River could not be traced, but based on the known locations of Ansoorge either side of the relevant date (W. R. J. Dean pers. comm.) this locality probably lies within the range of the other specimens. It may refer to the Luvili River that is situated in Huambo province, with a settlement of the same name at 12°07'23.5"S 15°26'22.6"E.

**Tabela 2.** Lista das localidades conhecidas onde o beija-flor-de-Bocage *Nectarinia bocagii* foi colhido em Angola, ordenados de norte para sul. Quase todas as localidades vêm de uma pequena área no planalto do Huambo, Huíla, Kwanza-Sul e Bié. Contudo, Cambundi Catembo, Cacolo e Ninda, ficam a uma longa distância desta área, sugerindo uma distribuição muito mais vasta para a espécie. Registos do rio Losili não puderam ser encontrados, mas baseando-se em locais de colecta conhecidos de Ansoorge à volta da data em questão (W.R.J. Dean com. pess.), esta localidade provavelmente corresponde à região dos outros espécimes. Poderá referir-se ao rio Luvili que se situa na província do Huambo, com uma povoação com o mesmo nas coordenadas 12°07'23.5"S, 15°26'22.6"E.

Locality name and province	Alternative name	Latitude (S)	Longitude (E)	Altitude
Cambundi Catembo: 25 km NW, Malanje	Nova Gaia, Songo	10°00'31.6"	17°20'14.6"	1,250 m
Cacolo: 40 km E, Lunda Sul		10°01'29.9"	19°35'30.0"	1,259 m
Chitau, Bié		11°25'35.2"	17°08'38.8"	1,486 m
Andulo, Bié	Vila Macedo de Cavaleiros	11°29'07.7"	16°41'35.5"	1,671 m
Chipepe, Kwanza Sul	Quipepe	11°59'47.4"	14°56'29.0"	1,722 m
Londumbali, Huambo	Luimbale	12°14'36.3"	15°18'48.6"	1,577 m
Calpiongo, Huambo		12°22'40.0"	15°11'33.5"	1,748 m
Mount Moco, Huambo	Fazenda do Cuito	12°24'49.1"	15°15'22.1"	1,672 m
Cuquema, Bié	Pedreira/Kukema River	12°28'54.1"	16°48'20.6"	1,741 m
Tchicala, Huambo	Vila Flor/ Ecuinha	12°40'56.3"	15°30'15.8"	1,773 m
Posto de Umpulo, Bié		12°42'14.4"	17°41'23.0"	1,419 m
Huambo, Huambo	Nova Lisboa	12°46'36.2"	15°44'1.7"	1,720 m
Cachingues, Bié		13°04'23.0"	16°45'0.6"	1,711 m
Cuima, Huambo		13°14'38.9"	15°38'20.6"	1,684 m
Caconda, Huíla		13°44'02.8"	15°03'37.3"	1,683 m
Goguê, Huíla	Chipindo	13°50'00.0"	15°50'00.0"	1,628 m
Uaba, Huíla	Laba	13°51'05.4"	14°54'28.3"	1,529 m
Cativa, Huíla		14°12'47.9"	16°10'17.4"	1,575 m
Ninda, Moxico		14°48'21.2"	21°23'03.1"	1,150 m
Losili River, Benguela		-	-	-

and east, respectively, of its formerly known range in Angola.

**Distribution and altitudinal range**

Bocage's Sunbird is confined to Angola and south-western DRC (Fry 2000, Cheke & Mann 2008). Traylor (1963) lists its distribution in Angola as the western highlands, from northern Huíla to Huambo and Bié provinces, based on earlier specimens. Besides the two specimens collected by Heinrich and one by Hart, all of the other 39 Angola specimens come from a relatively small area within the highlands of Huambo, Bié, southern Kwanza Sul and northern Huíla, which must for now be considered the species' core range. These records span the altitudinal range c.1,420–1,770 m, whereas all three specimens

collected outside of the core range are from 1,150–1,260 m, and those from the DRC come from as low as 600 m (Wille 1964).

It should be noted that Shelley (1900) and Fry (2000) also list Benguela as within the species' range, but the provincial boundaries have changed and while the type locality, Caconda, was originally in Benguela, it is now in Huíla (Law 1999). Dean (2000) lists Hanha in Benguela as a locality, but this is based on the misidentified specimen in the MZUC. Fry (2000) and Cheke & Mann (2008) include north-east Lunda Norte within its range, apparently based on Hall & Moreau (1970), but I cannot see where this is mentioned (certainly the distribution map does not show this) and am unable to locate any records from Lunda Norte.

Currently it is unclear whether the species actually possesses a rather patchy distribution across the Angolan plateau as suggested by the three outlying records and those from the DRC, or whether these latter records indicate a wider, continuous range throughout the plateau and into adjacent south-western DRC. The latter possibility appears more likely, given the paucity of ornithological work throughout most of Angola (Dean 2000).

### Field identification of adult males

There is little information available on the field identification of Bocage's Sunbird, and some descriptive details and illustrations are positively misleading. If relied upon, this information would and has led to the identification of the local *gadowi* subspecies of Bronzy Sunbird as Bocage's Sunbird. The only field guides that include Bocage's Sunbird are van Perlo (1999) and Sinclair & Ryan (2003, 2010). Information is also provided by Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1963), Fry (2000), Cheke *et al.* (2001) and Cheke & Mann (2008). Here I restrict discussion to the full adult male plumage.

Perhaps the single greatest misleading statement repeated by most sources is that Bocage's Sunbird appears all black at a distance and that no other long-tailed sunbird can appear all black within its range (Fry 2000, Cheke *et al.* 2001). In my experience Bronzy Sunbird is equally likely to appear all black. Fig. 1 illustrates that, under the same light conditions and alongside Bronzy Sunbird, Bocage's Sunbird is no blacker than Bronzy Sunbird. This feature is therefore not reliable for field identification.

The next feature often treated incorrectly is the colour of the gloss. Shelley's (1879) original description is probably the origin of this confusion, and deserves repetition here:

'Black, with the feathers on the upper half of the head, ear-coverts, back and sides of the neck, and the least series of wing-coverts broadly edged with metallic lilac, slightly glossed with blue, green, and copper; feathers on the back, scapulars, and upper tail-coverts broadly edged with metallic bluish-green, glossed with lilac; median series of wing-coverts narrowly edged with the same metallic colours of the back; remainder of wings brownish black, with a green gloss; the tail has a greenish gloss, and the feathers are narrowly and

indistinctly edged with violet-bronze; chin black; entire throat metallic bluish green, with a faint lilac gloss.'

I am not sure how Shelley reached these conclusions. I assume that in close-up examination under strong light these colours were visible in the plumage. Viewing the bird in the field, however, suggests nothing but a strong purplish-blue gloss, especially over the breast, head, mantle and back, with no green or bronze visible (Figs. 1–2). This is in contrast to the *gadowi* subspecies of Bronzy Sunbird which has a green-and-bronze gloss (Figs. 1 & 3).

Both field guides to treat the species illustrate it incorrectly. Sinclair & Ryan (2003, 2010) depict the species as having, if anything, a greenish tinge around the head, although they mention that it has a 'bronze (not greenish) metallic iridescence'. Van Perlo (1999) describes it as 'overall black with little reflection' and the illustration appears to show a blue-green iridescence.

Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1963) illustrate the colour of the gloss much more accurately, although the head is rather more bronze-coloured than in reality; the description of the colour as 'dull metallic blue-black with a purple wash' is accurate, although the word 'dull' should be under-emphasised. Fry (2000) gives it as 'mainly black, with inconspicuous dull bronzy violet reflections on head, breast, upperparts and wing-shoulders', once again with too much of a focus on 'dull' and 'inconspicuous', and the inclusion of 'bronzy'. Cheke *et al.* (2001) illustrate the species most accurately with a strong purplish sheen and describe it as 'metallic dark violet', whereas Cheke & Mann (2008) add 'reflecting blue-green, above', again referring to colours observed in the hand (R. A. Cheke *in litt.* 2012), although the illustration is correct and only shows a purplish sheen.

Other identification features mentioned, when compared to Bronzy Sunbird, are a shorter bill, shorter tail streamers and smaller size. While there may be measurable differences in the hand (I have not tested for these), I would advise against the use of any of these features in the field, as the differences are small (see Fig. 1). Furthermore, tail length can vary with plumage condition / wear; for example, Fig. 3 shows a Bronzy Sunbird with a relatively short tail. It should also be noted that Copper Sunbird *Cinnyris cupreus* occurs syntopically in Bocage's Sunbird's range, and can



also appear very black, although it is not the only sympatric dark sunbird as stated by Cheke *et al.* (2001).

In my experience the only reliable field character is the presence of a strong purple gloss, especially across the mantle, head, breast and back. With more experience it may be possible to distinguish Bocage's Sunbird and Bronzy Sunbird on size and bill length alone.

Another feature worth discussing is the observation that birds in the DRC have an eclipse plumage, whereas this has not been observed in Angola (Fry 2000). However, this is based on Wille's (1964) interpretation of his observation that outside the breeding season the strong metallic purple sheen on the back and underparts of males fades. I believe that this observation reflects feather wear, rather than birds moulting into an eclipse plumage; there appears to be no documented eclipse plumage for the species.

### Habitat

Not surprisingly, little is known about the habitat and habits of Bocage's Sunbird. Ripley & Heinrich (1966) collected two males from 'wide strips of open, flat, marshy meadows along brooks, interrupting the extensive and continuous brachystegia forests', where the birds were visiting swamp flowers. Hall (1960) noted the species in miombo (*Brachystegia*) woodland, but it is unclear whether they were inside the woodland or in open areas, such as dambos, in miombo woodland. Hart collected one at Ninda in an open, cultivated area surrounded by dense Zambezi teak (*Baikia plurijuga*) woodland (Benson & Irwin 1967). Habitat in DRC is similar; Wille (1964) observed the species in swampy grassland adjacent to the Kwilu River. All my observations of *c.* 10 different males are from within the known range in the western Angolan highlands, and all were in open, grassy or swampy habitats along rivers in miombo, but never inside the woodland itself. I have also observed several birds around a village (adjacent to a grassland-lined river) where they flew among the huts.

There are several sources that claim the habitat in Angola includes montane forest and that, based on this, the habitat in the DRC is quite different from that in Angola (Wille 1964, Lippens & Wille 1976, Fry 2000, Cheke *et al.* 2001, Cheke & Mann 2008). This appears to be based on

Wille's (1964) unsupported assumption that the first specimens from Caconda had been collected in dense vegetation with large trees (taken to be montane forest). In fact, the species has not been documented from montane forest.

### Diet, habits and breeding

Bocage's Sunbird's diet includes both nectar and invertebrates. Hall (1960) noted that it fed on *Erythrina* and red *Loranthus* flowers. I have seen it feeding on banana flowers, although I have most frequently observed the species feeding on low shrubs with orange or red flowers (see Fig. 2). In DRC, Wille (1964) observed it foraging on the purple flowers of *Sabicea* (previously *Stipularia*) *africana*. The gut contents of three specimens at LACM are catalogued as follows: 'spiders, diptera' (flies); 'spiders, diptera'; and 'minute beetles, diptera' (K. L. Garrett *in litt.* 2012).

The song of the species is still unknown; the female's call is described as a loud *wiep-wiep* and fighting males utter a rapid *kik-kik-kilo* and drawn-out *tsiek-tsiek* (Wille 1964). They have been observed to congregate around productive food sources (Wille 1964, Cheke *et al.* 2001).

The only breeding records are one from Huambo town in February 1931 (Dean & Milton 2007) and two nests with eggs in DRC in January and October (see Wille 1964 for details).

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**Appendix.** Alphabetical list of museum collections interrogated for Angolan specimens of Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagei*, either via direct correspondence or online search facilities.

**Apêndice.** Lista ordenada alfabeticamente das coleções museológicas consultadas para os espécimes em Angola de beija-flor-de-Bocage *Nectarinia bocagei*, quer através de correspondência directa quer por busca online.

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia  
 American Museum of Natural History, New York, USA (AMNH)  
 Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, USA (CMNH)  
 Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates, Ithaca, USA  
 Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, USA  
 Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, Los Angeles, USA (LACM)  
 Museu Nacional de Historia Natural, Lisbon, Portugal (MNHN; previously the Centro de Zoológia, Lisbon)  
 Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard, USA (MCZ)  
 Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin, Germany  
 Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, USA  
 Natural History Museum, Biodiversity Institute of the University of Kansas, Kansas City, USA  
 National Museum of Zambia, Livingstone, Zambia (NMZA)  
 National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC, USA  
 Natural History Museum, Tring, UK (BMNH)  
 University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, USA  
 Yale University Peabody Museum, New Haven, USA (YPM)  
 Zoology Museum, Hamburg, Germany

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## Photospot:

# Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* with yellow underparts

Ron Demey<sup>a</sup>

Photographs by Marc Hebbelinck<sup>b</sup>

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**Premières photos d'un Gonolek de Barbarie *Laniarius barbarus* à dessous jaune.** Un Gonolek de Barbarie *Laniarius barbarus* à dessous entièrement jaune a été photographié à Toubacouta, près du Parc National du Delta du Saloum, Sénégal, en mars 2012. L'espèce, qui est endémique à l'Afrique de l'Ouest, a normalement les parties inférieures rouge cramoisi. Depuis la découverte, en 1986, d'un oiseau à dessous jaune dans la même zone, aucun autre individu aberrant n'avait été rapporté. Les photos présentées ici sont les premières à être publiées de cette forme jaune.

The beautiful Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* is one of the most strikingly coloured species of *Laniarius*, the most species-rich genus of the bushshrike family Malaconotidae. Its head and upperparts are jet black but for a golden-yellow crown, whilst the underparts are vivid crimson. In 1986, Babacar Ndao discovered a Yellow-crowned Gonolek with entirely yellow underparts in the small village of Keur Gadj, near Delta du Saloum National Park, Senegal (Ndao 1989). This bird, which was regularly observed over the following seven years, was paired with a normal individual. In July 1990, the pair was accompanied by an apparently young bird, which also had yellow underparts (Ndao 1999). After its partner was killed by a slingshot, in July 1993, the aberrant adult remained in the same territory. It was frequently heard singing, but apparently remained unpaired, and was last seen in September 1996. Since then, no other aberrant individuals have been reported. In March 2012, however, Marc Hebbelinck photographed one in the garden of hotel 'Les Palétuviers' in Toubacouta, which is in the same area as the original sightings (Figs. 1–3). This individual was also paired with a normally coloured bird, with which it was repeatedly seen foraging and duetting (Fig. 4). These are apparently the first published photographs of Yellow-crowned Gonolek with yellow underparts.

There are three other, allopatric, *Laniarius* species with crimson underparts: Black-headed Gonolek *L. erythrogaster*, Papyrus Gonolek *L.*

*mufumbiri* and Crimson-breasted Shrike *L. atrococcineus*, but only the latter has a rare morph with yellow underparts (Fry 2009). Although the four black-and-crimson species were until recently regarded as so closely related as to constitute a superspecies, within which the black-and-yellow Yellow-breasted Boubou *L. atroflavus* was also included (Fry *et al.* 2000), genetic analysis has provided evidence that true relationships within this genus cannot be divined using plumage colour and pattern. Indeed, Crimson-breasted Shrike, an endemic of the Kalahari Basin and adjoining semi-arid areas, has been proven to be only distantly related to the others (Nguembock *et al.* 2008). However, Yellow-crowned Gonolek was often treated as conspecific with Black-headed Gonolek (Sibley & Monroe 1990, Harris & Franklin 2000), and recent molecular results confirm a sister relationship between these two species (Nguembock *et al.* 2008).

Yellow-crowned Gonolek is a locally fairly common to common western African endemic, occurring in a broad savanna belt from south Mauritania to Guinea, east to north Cameroon and Chad. It occurs singly or, usually, in pairs, its presence most often betrayed by the frequently uttered clear, resonant and ringing double whistle *WHEE-oo!* likened to a whiplash, to which the female usually responds, in a precisely synchronised duet, with a grating *kik-kik*. Although the species normally skulks in dense thickets, thorn scrub and mangroves, it regularly ventures into the open and is often easier to observe than its congeners.





## Legend to figures on opposite page

**Figures 1–3.** Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* with yellow underparts, Toubacouta, Senegal, 2 & 7 March 2012 (Marc Hebbelinck)

Gonolek de Barbarie *Laniarius barbarus* à dessous entièrement jaune, Toubacouta, Sénégal, 2 & 7 mars 2012 (Marc Hebbelinck)

**Figure 4.** Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* with yellow underparts paired with normally coloured individual, Toubacouta, Senegal, 2 March 2012 (Marc Hebbelinck)

Gonolek de Barbarie *Laniarius barbarus* à dessous entièrement jaune accouplé à un individu normal, Toubacouta, Sénégal, 2 mars 2012 (Marc Hebbelinck)

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# Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 2012, with a few from earlier dates.** We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to the ABC country checklists ([www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html)) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment les 'checklists' des pays africains du ABC ([www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html)) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

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Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données de 2012 ; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données

## Angola

Reports from February–August 2012 include the following. The northernmost records of **Monteiro's Bushshrike** *Malaconotus monteiri* and **Gabela Helmetshrike** *Prionops gabela* were made in the Caxito area, Bengo, on 19 August. **Pale Olive Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus fulviventris*, **White-fronted Wattle-eye** *Platysteira albigifrons* and **Gabela Helmetshrike** were found in the Muxima area, Bengo, on 12 February. Records from Cuanza Norte include **Angola Lark** *Mirafra angolensis* near Camabatela on 21 August and many breeding **Golden-backed Bishops** *Euplectes aureus* in the Dondo area on 8 May. In Cangandala National Park, Malanje, a **Böhm's Spinetail** *Neafriapus boebmi* observed on 8 May and a **Compact Weaver** *Pachyphantes superciliosus* on 4 May were additions to the park's list (cf. Mills *et al.* 2008). The avifauna of Cangandala National Park, Angola. *Bull. ABC* 15: 113–120; the spinetail was seen entering an old well, perhaps prospecting a breeding site. At Mount Moco, Huambo, a **Greater Kestrel** *Falco rupicoloides* observed on 29 August was a surprise find; the species is very rare away from the coastal plain. **Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark**

*Eremopterx leucotis*, seen on 20 May, was new for the park (MM).

## Azores

In the period June–December 2012, several species were observed for the first time in the archipelago, including **Zino's Petrel** *Pterodroma madeira* (one photographed at Fortune Bank, c.21 nautical miles east of Graciosa on 1 August—first sight record; previous ones were recorded by geolocators), **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* (one photographed at Fortune Bank on 1 August), **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* (one on Corvo on 19–20 October), **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* (one on Terceira from 28 August through mid September), **American Robin** *Turdus migratorius* (one on Corvo from 17 October to 1 November), **Golden-winged Warbler** *Vermivora chrysoptera* (one on Corvo on 12–13 October) and **Prairie Warbler** *Setophaga discolor* (one on Corvo on 20–23 October).

A **Trindade Petrel** *Pterodroma arminjoniana* was seen off Graciosa on 26 June and a **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* off Pico on 21 July. An adult **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* was present in Horta harbour, Faial,

in the first half of September. The fifth **Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* for the Azores stayed on Terceira on 20–26 November.

**Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* were seen on Terceira on 12 October and 16 December, and on Corvo on 1 November. Two adults and a juvenile **Common Crane** *Grus grus* on Corvo from 31 October to 2 November, with two still there on 27 November, constituted the second record for the Azores. Up to five **Eurasian Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* stayed on Santa Maria in October–December, with one on Corvo on 22–26 October. A **Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* was photographed on São Miguel on 5 October. The fourth **Little Tern** *Sternula albigifrons* for the Azores was observed on Terceira on 30 October. The pair of **Sooty Terns** *Onychoprion fuscatus* on Ilhéu da Praia, Graciosa, failed to raise its single chick, which was found dead on 17 June; an adult was still present on 9 September. A juvenile **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was reported at Lagoa do Junco, Terceira, on 14 September.

As in previous years, many Nearctic vagrants were recorded. **Pied-billed Grebes** *Podilymbus podiceps* stayed on Flores, São

Miguel (up to two) and Terceira, and **Double-crested Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax auritus* on São Miguel (up to five), Terceira (up to three), Graciosa (two) and Pico (one). Herons included an **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* on Pico on 18 October; the fourth **Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* for the Azores on São Miguel from 24 June until 15 July, with the fifth also there on 21 October; the third **Tricoloured Heron** *E. tricolor* on Terceira on 20 October; single **American Great Egrets** *E. alba egretta* on Santa Maria and Pico; and a juvenile **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* on Corvo from 25 September to 1 November.

Rare waterfowl included the first **Todd's Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis interior* photographed on Corvo on 16 October, with another seen on Faial on 24 October; several **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris*; a **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* still on Flores on 31 October and a male on São Miguel on 8 November; a juvenile **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* on Terceira from 29 October until being found dead on 2 November; several **American Wigeons** *Anas americana*, **Blue-winged Teals** *A. discolor* and **Green-winged Teals** *A. carolinensis* (including up to seven on Flores on 15 October); and several **American Black Ducks** *A. rubripes* on Corvo and Flores. On 12 October, a **Sora** *Porzana carolina* was noted on Flores and an **American Coot** *Fulica americana* on Santa Maria on 16–20 November.

Waders included at least 40 **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus*; a **Killdeer** *C. vociferus* on Santa Maria; at least 30 **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* (with ten on São Miguel on 7–10 October); several **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla*; a few **Least Sandpipers** *C. minutilla* on Terceira; an unprecedented influx of at least 700 **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* (with c.288 on Terceira alone on 13 October); three **Baird's Sandpipers** *C. bairdii* on Flores; several **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos*; single **Buff-**

**breasted Sandpipers** *C. (=Tryngites) subruficollis* on Santa Maria and Corvo; several **Wilson's Snipes** *Gallinago g. delicata* on Corvo, São Miguel and Terceira; a **Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus* on Terceira on 15–19 August; a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *L. scolopaceus* on São Miguel on 8–13 October; a few **Hudsonian Whimbrels** *Numenius (phaeopus) hudsonicus* on Terceira; a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* on São Miguel on 28 August–2 September; several **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes*; single **Solitary Sandpipers** *T. solitaria* on Corvo, Santa Maria, São Miguel and off Graciosa; a **Willet** *T. semipalmata* (= *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) on São Miguel on 18 October; and a few **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* on various islands.

A **Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla* was observed on Corvo on 26 August and 16 October. A first-winter **Bonaparte's Gull** *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* stayed on Terceira from 28 October to at least mid December. Several **American Herring Gulls** *Larus (argentatus) smithsonianus* were found on São Miguel and Terceira. **Belted Kingfishers** *Megasceryle alcyon* were seen on Santa Maria and Flores. The third **American Mourning Dove** *Zenaidura macroura* for the archipelago stayed on Corvo from 22 October to 1 November. A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* was recorded on Flores on 17 October.

Except where otherwise indicated, all the following Nearctic passerines were observed on Corvo: a **Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor* on 8 October; an **American Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster* on 12 and 15 October; up to four **American Cliff Swallows** *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* on 7–14 October (with one on Flores on 30 October); up to four **American Buff-bellied Pipits** *Anthus r. rubescens* on 15–22 October (with one on Flores on 23 October); a **Wood Thrush** *Hylocichla mustelina* on 9–16 October (second record); a **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* on 13–18 October; a **White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus* on

Flores on 6 October; a **Philadelphia Vireo** *V. philadelphicus* on 14–18 October; c.10 **Red-eyed Vireos** *V. olivaceus* between 4 and 11 October (with singles on Flores on 15 and 19 October, and on Terceira on 7 October).

American warblers on Corvo included a **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* on 12–16 October; a **Tennessee Warbler** *Oreothlypis peregrina* on 13–18 October (fourth record); a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* on 16–17 October (with one on Flores on 16–17 October); a **Magnolia Warbler** *Setophaga magnolia* on 10 October (second or third record); an **American Yellow Warbler** *S. petechia* on 20–21 October; up to two **Blackpoll Warblers** *S. striata* on 13–20 October (and one on São Miguel on 13–21 October); up to two **Myrtle Warblers** *S. coronata* on 20–25 October; a **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* on 12–17 October; and two **Northern Waterthrushes** *Parkesia noveboracensis* on 6–15 October (with singles on São Miguel on 25 August and 2 October).

Still on Corvo, the second and third **Lincoln's Sparrows** *Melospiza lincolni* were seen on 17–18 October and 31 October, and the third and fourth **Dickcissels** *Spiza americana* on 14–16 October and 23 October. Several **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* were encountered between 5 and 19 October (with two on Flores on 15 and 18–20 October) and several **Indigo Buntings** *Passerina cyanea* between 4 and 21 October (with one on Flores on 11 and 14 October). A **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* was present on 22 September and several between 5–24 October (with one on Flores on 14–17 October) (per *Dutch Birding* 34: 255–261, 324–334 & 398–416; *Birding World* 25: 279, 325, 371, 426–427 & 459–460; [www.azoresbs.weebly.com](http://www.azoresbs.weebly.com)).

## Benin

The following records are from June–December 2012, with a few from earlier in the year. Three species have been added to the country's list: **Wilson's Storm-**





**Figure 1.** Wilson's Storm-petrel / Océanite de Wilson *Oceanites oceanicus*, c.20 km off Cotonou, Benin, 16 September 2012 (Bruno Portier)

**Figure 2.** Ferruginous Ducks / Fuligules nyroca *Aythya nyroca*, Île aux Oiseaux, Benin, 1 March 2012 (Agnès Giannotti)

**Figure 3.** Lesser Jacana / Jacana nain *Microparra capensis*, Île aux Oiseaux, Benin, 1 March 2012 (Agnès Giannotti)

**Figure 4.** Sanderling / Bécasseau sanderling *Calidris alba*, Cotonou, Benin, 2 September 2012 (Bruno Portier)

**Figure 5.** Marsh Owl / Hibou du Cap *Asio capensis*, Plaine du Sô, Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, Benin, 1 December 2012 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

**Figure 6.** Parasitic Weaver / Anomalospize parasite *Anomalospiza imberbis*, Plaine du Sô, Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, Benin, 1 December 2012 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

**Figure 7.** Bronze-winged Courser / Courvite à ailes bronzées *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*, near Sini, Atacora region, Benin, 29 December 2012 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

**Figure 8.** Male Wilson's Indigobird / Combassou de Wilson *Vidua wilsoni*, Abomey-Calavi, Benin, 20 September 2012 (Cadnel Toundoh)

**petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*, with at least three photographed during a pelagic trip c.20 km off Cotonou (at 06°10'54"N 02°33'38"E) on 16 September (Fig. 1; BP); **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*, with up to six photographed on 'Île aux Oiseaux' on the Niger River, in the extreme north (c.12°01'N 03°14'E), on 1 March (Fig. 2; AG); and **Little Rush Warbler** *Bradypterus baboecala*, with up to 12 singing in the Plaine

du Sô, Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, in December (JM & SM). **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis*, a species awaiting confirmation for the country, was also photographed on 'Île aux Oiseaux' on 1 March (Fig. 3; AG), with another observed in the south on a pool along the Zou River (07°12'36"N 02°17'24"E) on 28 June (BP).

A pale-morph **Wahlberg's Eagle** *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*, an

inadequately known species in Benin, was mobbed by a Pied Crow *Corvus albus* over Coby on 9 September. Single **White-throated Francolins** *Peliperdix albogularis* were calling at Nanakade, east of Coby, on 7 July and at Yangou, north-west of Coby, on 21 July. A **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* was calling from a flooded plain north of Tanguéta on 19 August. North of Porto Novo, a pair of **Egyptian Plovers** *Pluvianus*

*aegyptius* was noted by the roadside north of Affamè, near the Ouémé River, on 23 May (JM & SM).

Among unusually large numbers of **Sanderlings** *Calidris alba* at Cotonou in September (with groups of up to 200), two individuals that had been colour-ringed in Ghana up to two years earlier were observed (Fig. 4; BP). At Togbin, c.10 km west of Cotonou, five **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *Larus fuscus* flew west along the beach on 25 November (BP). Single **Damara Terns** *Sternula balanearum* headed west off Cotonou on 30 June and 11 September (BP); a group of >60 was reported from the 'Bouche du Roy' (c.06°17'N 01°56'E) on 14 October, among Royal *Thalasseus maximus* and Sandwich Terns *T. sandvicensis* (CT).

In the Plaine du Sô, Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, six **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea* and a **Little Stint** *C. minuta* were noted on 15 December, with a **Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* (Fig. 5) and a **Parasitic Weaver** *Anomalospiza imberbis* (Fig. 6) also there on 1 December (JM & SM).

Two **Bronze-winged Coursers** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* were observed near Sini, Atacora region, on 29 December (Fig. 7). A juvenile **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* was being fed by a Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* at Datori, west of Coby, on 5 August; this appears to be the first breeding record of the species for Benin (JM & SM). Near Bantè, in the central Département des Collines, three **Piping Hornbills** *Bycanistes fistulator* were observed in a degraded riverine forest (08°21'36"N 02°04'12"E) on 13 June; the species is seldom recorded outside protected forest sites. In the adjacent wooded savanna **White-breasted Cuckooshrike** *Coracina pectoralis* and **Yellow-bellied Hyliota** *Hyliota flavigaster* were seen (BP). **Black-backed Cisticolas** *Cisticola eximius* were identified in floodplains south of Coby on 29 July, 12 August and 1 September, and north of Tanguiéta on 19 August (JM & SM). More records of **Zebra Waxbill** *Amandava subflava* and **Anambra Waxbill** *Estrilda poliopareia* were

reported from Sô-Ava (cf. Bull ABC 19: 19–24 & 223) with 15 and six individuals, respectively, on 3 June (BP). On 20 September, adult and juvenile **Wilson's Indigobirds** *Vidua wilsoni* were photographed at Abomey-Calavi, near Cotonou, next to their host, **Bar-breasted Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rufopicta* (Fig. 8; CT).

## Botswana

An **Angola Pitta** *Pitta angolensis*, photographed in a Maun garden in late December 2012, is a new record for the country (MMu et al.). A **Karoo Thrush** *Turdus smithii* was also observed in Maun, on 14 October (MMu & AF); this is well outside its usual range in south-east Botswana. Other notable records being assessed by the Records Subcommittee of BirdLife Botswana include an **Eastern Nicator** *Nicator gularis* at Kasane in December (AB) and an **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* at Lesoma, near Kasane (per ST).

An unprecedented movement of **flamingos** appears to have occurred in Ngamiland and into the Chobe area, mostly of **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor*, with a small number of **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus*: considerable numbers were reported in early September, after years with only odd stragglers noted in the area, the most impressive being two flocks of >1,000 individuals at Xigera Lagoon (19°19'48"S 22°42'05"E). In late November, two **European Turtle Doves** *Streptopelia turtur* were reported from the Savuti area: one along the Savuti Channel, opposite President's Camp, with another 25 km away at a waterhole at Ghoha Hills Lodge. Also of interest was a **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* at Savuti marsh (per sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com).

## Burkina Faso

Records from October 2012 include the following. A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* flew south over Koubri, 20 km south of Ouagadougou, on 19th. Three **Bronze-winged Coursers** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* were encountered in

farmbush just south of Ouaga on 30th. At Koubri, two **Great Spotted Cuckoos** *Clamator glandarius* were observed on 16th, whilst two **Blackcap Babblers** *Turdoides reinwardtii* were mist-netted on 3rd (RS).

## Cameroon

### A Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush

*Cichladusa ruficauda*, which appeared to be nest-building, was photographed in Douala in February 2012. This is only the second record for the country, following the species' discovery in Douala in February 2010 (cf. Bull. ABC 18: 76) (ML).

## Canary Islands

Records from June–December 2012 include the following. Two firsts for the Canaries were recorded during the period: a first-winter **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* on El Hierro from 22 October through November, and an immature **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* twice perched aboard HMS Protector between Tenerife and Gran Canaria on 23–24 September. A potential first was a **Dark Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax metabates* seen briefly between Lajares and La Oliva, Fuerteventura, on 22 July; this species is not kept in captivity on the islands and weather conditions in previous days were favourable to a natural arrival. Second reports for the archipelago included a **Scopoli's Shearwater** *Calonectris d. diomedea* photographed north of Lanzarote on 30 June, a **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* photographed at the Banco de la Concepción, c.45 nautical miles north of Lanzarote, on 18 August, and an adult **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* also there on 19th.

Also at the Banco de la Concepción off Lanzarote on 18 August were six **Wilson's Storm-petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus*, with seven there the next day, whilst two were at Banco de Dacia, 90 nautical miles north-east of Lanzarote, on 11 November. A **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* was observed at Banco de la Concepción on 15 September. An immature **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was at





**Figure 9.** White-rumped Sandpiper / Bécasseau de Bonaparte *Calidris fuscicollis*, Las Galletas, Arona, Tenerife, Canary Islands, November 2012 (Rubén Barone Tosco)



**Figure 10.** Lesser Yellowlegs / Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes*, Las Galletas, Arona, Tenerife, Canary Islands, November 2012 (Rubén Barone Tosco)

Santa Lucia, Gran Canaria, on 24 November. The long-staying immature **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus*, first seen at Charca de Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, on 17 September 2011, was still there in early December. Single female **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were noted on La Palma, Tenerife and Fuerteventura in December; on the latter island a male was also present.

#### American Golden Plovers

*Pluvialis dominica* were reported from Gran Canaria on 13 October (four), Lanzarote on 9–12 October and 7–9 November (one), and Fuerteventura on 1 November (one). **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* were observed on La Palma on 9–10 October (four), Fuerteventura (at least one), Lanzarote (up to two), Tenerife in November (up to three; Fig. 9) and Gran Canaria on 17 November (two). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* was on La Palma on 9–10 October, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* on Tenerife from 29 October until 2 November (Fig. 10), whilst up to four **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* were on El Hierro on 23–27 October, with one there on 1 December. Two **Red Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* were seen c.45 nautical miles north of Lanzarote on 18 August. Single **Audouin's Gulls** *Ichthyæetus audouinii* were observed at Puerto del Carmen, Lanzarote, on 20 August and at Puerto de

la Palmas, Gran Canaria, on 3 November, whilst single **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were seen on Lanzarote in July–August and on Gran Canaria on 1 December. A moribund **Common Guillemot** *Uria aalge* was found at Punta Larga, Tenerife, on 19 December; it died the next day.

On Fuerteventura, four **Olive-backed Pipits** *Anthus hodgsoni* were observed on 19 November, with three remaining there until the end of the year; there was an influx of this species into Western Europe during autumn 2012. Also on the same island, in December, two **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* were found, with another on Lanzarote. A male **Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri* was at Las Lajas, Tenerife, on 25 August. Finally, on Fuerteventura, a **Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* was observed at Costa Calma on 20 December (per *Dutch Birding* 34: 324–326 & 398–416; *Birding World* 25: 325, 427, 460 & 499; [www.rarebirdspain.net](http://www.rarebirdspain.net)).

#### Cape Verde Islands

A white-morph **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* was photographed on Raso on 9 October 2012 (per *Dutch Birding* 34: 398); there are six previous records from Cape Verdean seas (cf. Hazevoet, C. J. 2012. Seventh report on birds from the Cape Verde Islands, including records of nine taxa new to the

archipelago. *Zool. Caboverdiana* 3: 1–28).

Records from December 2012 included the following. Two species were recorded for the first time in the archipelago, both at Mindelo sewage works, São Vicente: **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* (one on 20th–21st) and **Whiskered Tern** *Cblidonias hybrida* (one on 20th–30th). The second **European Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* for the Cape Verdes was also there on 29th–30th.

On Santiago, c.50 **Fea's Petrels** *Pterodroma feae* were attracted to hotel lights at Rui Vaz in the central mountains on 7th. Single **Great Egrets** *Egretta alba* were seen at Casa Velhas, Maio, on 10th (fifth record) and at Mindelo sewage works, São Vicente, on 29th–30th. Vagrant ducks on Santiago included several **Northern Pintails** *Anas acuta* at Pedro Badejo lagoons on 9th (sixth record), with two also at Mindelo sewage works, São Vicente, and four **Blue-winged Teals** *A. discors* (fifth record), two **Northern Shovelers** *A. clypeata* (fifth record) and five **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* at Barragem de Poilão on 8th (fifth record). On Sal, an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was found at Santa Maria sewage works on 6th (14th record), whilst on Maio, a **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* was at Ribeira Dom Joao on 11th (sixth record), with a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* also there (16th record) and three more at Mindelo sewage works, São Vicente, on 20th–21st. Also at Mindelo sewage works on the same dates were two **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* (tenth record) and a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* (17th record), with two **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* there on 29th–30th (eighth record) (per *Birding World* 25: 498).

#### Congo-Brazzaville

A survey in July–August 2012 west of the proposed Ogooué-Leketi National Park found one new species for Congo: **Verreaux's Batis** *Batis minima*. The following appear to be new for the south of the country: **Willcocks's Honeyguide**



**Figure 11.** Great White Pelican / Pélican blanc *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Conkouati-Douli National Park, Congo-Brazzaville, 1 January 2011 (Naftali Honig)

*Indicator willcocksi*, **Eastern Wattled Cuckooshrike** *Lobotos oriolinus* and **Uganda Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus budongoensis*. Also noteworthy were **Grey-headed Broadbill** *Smithornis sharpei*, **White-spotted Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophya tonsa*, **Orange-tufted Sunbird** *Nectarinia bouvieri* and **Mackinnon's Shrike** *Lanius mackinnoni* (HR).

A belated report was received of three **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* photographed at 18.00 hrs c.15 km north-east of Conkouati Lagoon in Conkouati-Douli National Park on 1 January 2011; they appeared to be preparing to roost in the forest canopy quite far from any large body of water (Fig. 11; *NHo*)

## Egypt

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* was again observed at Hamata mangroves south of Marsa Allam on 17 September 2012. **Three-banded**



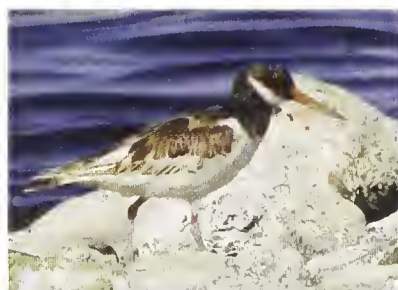
**Figure 12.** Three-banded Plover / Pluvier à triple collier *Charadrius tricollaris*, Aswan, Egypt, 23 September 2012 (Vaughan Ashby / Birdfinders)

**Plovers** *Charadrius tricollaris* also continue to be regularly encountered, with individuals being seen at Abu Simbel (e.g. three on 22 September) and Aswan (one on 23 September; Fig. 12). A first-winter **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* was seen at Hamata dock on 17 September (VA).

## Ethiopia

A **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was discovered in a small marsh at Lake Awassa on 1 November 2011 (Fig. 13); this is a very rare Palearctic winter visitor to Ethiopia; Ash & Atkins (2009). *Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea* mention just two documented records. Also there was a **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis*, a species now regularly seen in the Rift Valley (Fig. 14; *PF, MG & SR*).

On 21 November 2012, a **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was photographed on the shores of Lake Shalla (Fig. 15; *DC & CR* per *DH*); this may constitute the first documented report for the country: according to Ash & Atkins (2009) there are only two unsubstantiated inland records for Ethiopia. Other November 2012 records include three **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca*—a rather uncommon and irregular Palearctic winter visitor—on Lake Hora, Debre Zeit, on 15th; a **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* on the Sanetti Plateau, Bale Mountains, on 21st (*NB*); a **Cape Eagle Owl** *Bubo capensis* photographed at its daytime roost in a tree at the low altitude of 1,600 m near Lake Langano on 10th (Fig. 16; its altitudinal range is stated to be 2,720–4,240 m in Ash & Atkins 2009) (*VA & SA*); an aberrantly coloured **Somali Crow** *Corvus edithae* with a flock of normal individuals photographed on the Goba–Sof Omar road on 3rd (Fig. 17; *VA & SA*); three **Ankober Serins** *Carduelis ankoberensis* at Debre Libanos on 11th—apparently a range extension (*NB*); and at least eight **Cinereous Buntings** *Emberiza cineracea*, a rarely recorded species in the country, along the road from



## Top to bottom

**Figure 13.** Citrine Wagtail / Bergeronnette citrine *Motacilla citreola*, Lake Awassa, Ethiopia, 1 November 2011 (Paul French)

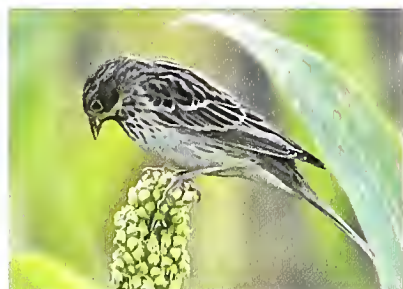
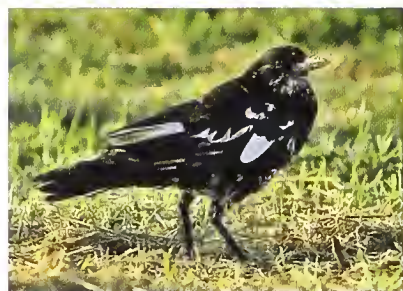
**Figure 14.** Basra Reed Warbler / Rousserolle d'Irak *Acrocephalus griseldis*, Lake Awassa, Ethiopia, 1 November 2011 (Paul French)

**Figure 15.** Eurasian Oystercatcher / Huîtrier pie *Haematopus ostralegus*, Lake Shalla, Ethiopia, 21 November 2012 (Dave Chantler)

Lomi Ketema into the Jemma Valley on 15th (Fig. 18; *VA & SA*).

An off-the-beaten-track visit to Mille, in the north-eastern Afar region, on 14–25 September 2012, produced 130 species, observed mainly within 4 km of the town, along the Afar River. Highlights included an **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum*, a rarely recorded Palearctic migrant, on 18th and, especially, four **Cretzschmar's Buntings** *Emberiza caesia*, presumably two pairs, in summer plumage on 22nd and 24th.





#### Top to bottom

**Figure 16.** Cape Eagle Owl / Grand-duc du Cap *Bubo capensis*, Lake Langano, Ethiopia, 10 November 2012 (Svetlana Ashby / Birdfinders)

**Figure 17.** Aberrant Somali Crow / Corbeau d'Edith *Corvus edithae*, Goba-Sof Omar road, Ethiopia, 3 November 2012 (Svetlana Ashby / Birdfinders)

**Figure 18.** Cinereous Bunting / Bruant cendré *Emberiza cineracea*, Lomi Ketema–Jemma Valley road, Ethiopia, 15 November 2012 (Svetlana Ashby / Birdfinders)

New half-degree squares (cf. Ash & Atkins 2009) were noted for the following species: **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* (one on 24th), **Black-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus tectus* (two on 24th), **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* (a male over

Mille town on 16th and 22nd), **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* (singles on 15th and 23rd), **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* (up to two of the race *cyaneula* on 21st–22nd), **Pale Prinia** *Prinia somalica* (up to four per day on five days) and **Yellow-spotted Petronia** *Gymnoris pyrgita* (six on 23rd). Two **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were seen on 18th (there are few records in Ethiopia) and up to 30+ **Sudan Golden Sparrows** *Passer luteus* per day throughout, with juveniles being fed by adults (RS).

#### The Gambia

Excellent views were obtained of a **Quail-plover** *Ortyxelos meiffrenii* in a harvested groundnut field between Farafenni and Kau'ur, on the north bank, on 23 November 2012 (VA & SA).

#### Ghana

A **Bat Hawk** *Machieramphus alcinus* flew over Hohoe, between Lake Volta and the Togolese border, on 12 November 2012 (RS). Two immature **Rüppell's Griffon Vultures** *Gyps rueppellii* were photographed in Mole National Park on 18 December (Fig. 19; DH); this may well represent the first certain evidence of the species' occurrence in the park. At Sakumono



**Figure 19.** Immature Rüppell's Griffon Vultures *Gyps rueppellii* (back left) with White-backed Vultures *G. africanus*, Mole National Park, Ghana, 18 December 2012 (David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

Vautours de Rüppell *Gyps rueppellii* immatures avec Vautours africain *G. africanus* (en arrière-plan à gauche), Parc National de Mole, Ghana, 18 décembre 2012 (David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

Lagoon, a **Common Teal** *Anas crecca*, an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* were observed on 5 December, with five **Pied Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* also there on 25th (DH). At least three **Forest Chestnut-winged Starlings** *Onychognathus fulgidus*, recorded at Wii (Agumatsa) Falls near Hohoe on 13 November, represent the first report for the Volta Region (RS).

#### Kenya

The following reports are from June–December 2012. An adult female **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* flew over the beach at Watamu on 25 October. Two **Gadwalls** *Anas strepera*, a very rare Palearctic migrant in Kenya, were seen on 30 November at two different sites: one on Manguo Pond, Limuru, and another at Marula Farm, Lake Naivasha. A **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* was on Manguo Pond, Limuru, for most of November; this is a rare migrant in the country. An adult **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini* was photographed at the Bunyala rice scheme on 28 October. An immature female **Levant Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter brevipes*, first seen at Ngulia, Tsavo West National Park (=NP), in the evening of 14 November, was trapped and ringed the following morning—this is the first to be ringed in East Africa; a male flew over the lodge on 15 November. An adult female **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *A. nisus* attacked a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 23 November; prior to c.10 years ago, this species was very rarely recorded in Kenya, but it has become almost annual at Ngulia, with one or two other records elsewhere. A **Dark Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax metabates* was noted at Sosian Ranch, western Laikipia—an uncommon species east of the Rift Valley. Single **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* were observed at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 15 and 16 November, with an adult at Lake Nakuru NP on 10 December; this is a rare species in Kenya, which is



most frequently reported from the Rift Valley.

An unusually large flock of 40 **Grey Crowned Cranes** *Balearica regulorum* was encountered in Nairobi NP on 11 October; this magnificent species has much decreased in numbers over the past 20 years. An adult male **Heuglin's Bustard** *Neotis heuglini* in Shaba Game Reserve on 20 July is a rare record for this area. A **Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* on a dam on Sosian Ranch, western Laikipia, is an unusual record away from the Rift Valley or the coast. A **Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* at Lake Nakuru NP on 22 July is an unusual date for this species, which became quite common in the 1990s but has grown scarce again over the past ten years; another was at Naivasha on 9 December. More than 1,000 pairs of **Roseate Terns** *Sterna dougallii* bred on Kisite Island in June–October, but there was no breeding attempt at the Watamu colony on Whale Island. An **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* at Mida Creek on 3 October is a very unusual record for this site.

A **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* was observed in a garden in Langata, Nairobi, on 3 December; there are only c.10 records in Kenya. A **Purple-crested Turaco** *Tauraco porphyreolophus* first seen in the Nairobi Arboretum, in the city centre, on 25 June was still present on 26 October; the species is normally found c.50 km from the city. An **Asian Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus poliocephalus* was ringed at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 20 November. In Kakamega Forest, a **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* was found in early November; this species is only recorded in Kenya every few years.

An **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* in Laikipia on 11 October was an early record. A female **Abyssinian Black Wheatear** *O. (lugens) lugubris* at Uthiru, on the outskirts of Nairobi, on 11 August was unusual for a species restricted mostly to the Rift Valley. Seven **Grey-backed Fiscals** *Lanius excubitoroides* were counted along an

11 km-stretch of the road north of Rumuruti on 23 August; this species had not previously been recorded east of the Rift Valley. A flock of **White-crested Helmetshrikes** *Prionops plumatus* at Nguu Tatu, near Mombasa, on 27 August was a first for the area; the species is normally absent from the coastal strip, but in the past two years it has appeared along the beach front in Watamu. More than 15 **African Silverbills** *Lonchura cantans* were observed in Nairobi NP on 18 November, with one pair nest building; this appears to be more than vagrancy for this arid-country species. A stunning adult male **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* ringed at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 21 November, was only the second there in 44 years of ringing (per CJ).

### Libya

#### A Cream-coloured Courser

*Cursorius cursor* was photographed off the coast of Libya on 18 July 2011 and a **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* was also observed at sea the next day (TT per Sea Swallow 61: 27).

### Madagascar

In October 2012, two species were recorded that are not included in the ABC *Checklist of the birds of Madagascar* and are thus apparently firsts for Madagascar: **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Calidris* (= *Tryngites*) *subruficollis*, photographed between Toliara and Ifaty, in the south-west, on 1st (Fig. 20; LH & CR), and **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*, located at a small wetland along the same road on 28th (Fig. 21; DH). A **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* was photographed at Anakao, near Toliara, on 4 October (Fig. 22); this species breeds on the rocky northern coast but is seldom seen in the south. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*, a rare vagrant to the island, was found at Ifaty on 30 September. A **Madagascar Plover** *Charadrius thoracicus* was breeding at Ifaty on 30 September; as is known for this species (and other *Charadrius* plovers), the bird covered its two eggs



#### Top to bottom

**Figure 20.** Buff-breasted Sandpiper / Bécasseau roussâtre *Calidris* (= *Tryngites*) *subruficollis*, between Toliara and Ifaty, Madagascar, 1 October 2012 (Lee Hunter)

**Figure 21.** Red-necked Phalarope / Phalarope à bec étroit *Phalaropus lobatus*, between Toliara and Ifaty, Madagascar, 28 October 2012 (David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

**Figure 22.** White-tailed Tropicbird / Phaéton à bec jaune *Phaethon lepturus*, Anakao, near Toliara, Madagascar, 4 October 2012 (Phil Palmer)





**Figures 23–24.** Madagascar Plover / Pluvier à bandeau noir *Charadrius thoracicus* at nest, Ifaty, Madagascar, 30 September 2012 (Phil Palmer / Bird Holidays)

Pluvier à bandeau noir *Charadrius thoracicus* auprès de son nid, Ifaty, Madagascar, 30 septembre 2012 (Phil Palmer / Bird Holidays)

with dry vegetation upon leaving the nest (Figs. 23–24; *PP*). **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* was seen at Toliara on 4 October (*PP*).

#### Madeira

The following noteworthy records were reported from the period June–December 2012. A **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* was observed on a pelagic trip on 24–28 August. A **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* was at Funchal on 21 September. Rare ducks included a male **Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis* at Ribeira da Janela on 17 October, a **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* at Faial on 19 October (second record) and an immature **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* at Calheta on 16 October and Funchal on 19th. Single **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* were noted at Machico on

26 July and at Santa Cruz on 28 September, whilst a **Black Kite** *M. migrans* was seen at Ponta do Pargo on 28 November. Four **Eleonora's Falcons** *Falco eleonorae* were observed between Pico do Arieiro and Pico Ruivo on 21 August, whilst single **Peregrine Falcons** *F. peregrinus* were present at Machico and Ribeira da Janela throughout July. The second **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* for Madeira was photographed on 30 June; it was still present in early July. Other vagrant waders included a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* at Lugar de Baixo on 20 October; a **Curlew Sandpiper** *C. ferruginea* also there on 26 August; two **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Calidris* (= *Tryngites*) *subruficollis* at Paul da Serra on 27 September; and a **Hudsonian Wimbrel** *Numenius (phaeopus) hudsonicus* which remained into September. On 14 June, an adult pale-morph **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccornicki* was photographed off the Desertas Islands. A **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* was reported on 28 September (per *Dutch Birding* 34: 261 & 329–331; *Birding World* 25: 279, 325 & 427; [www.madeirabirds.com](http://www.madeirabirds.com)).

#### Mali

A **Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica* was observed in the outskirts of Bamako on 29 September 2012; the species reaches the northern edge of its range in Mali and there are few records for the country, with this apparently being the first from the Bamako area (*MC*, *BPi*, *KT* & *JS*).

#### Mauritania

The first **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* for the country, a juvenile, was observed offshore at 19°22'26"N 18°59'22"W on 10 October 2012; a second (or the same) individual was noted at 18°03'09"N 16°34'43"W on 16 November (*RI*).

Records from the south, made along the road from Nouakchott to Kiffa, Ayoun, Timbhedga and Nema on 21–23 October, include some noteworthy distributional data

(cf. Isenmann *et al.* 2010. *Birds of Mauritania*) for **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* (at least 50 at Nema), **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* (7–8, including four juveniles, at Timbedgha), **Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinicus* (one between Ayoun and Kiffa; an adult and a juvenile at Kiffa), **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* (one near Ayoun), **Western Red-billed Hornbill** *Tockus (erythrorhynchus) kempi* (one between Ayoun and Kiffa), and **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* (observed at Kiffa, Ayoun and Timbedgha) (*JS*).

#### Morocco

The following reports are from 2012. An immature **Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* was seen on passage with a group of 23 Eurasian Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* at Meknès on 14 November (*JF*). A second-calendar year **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* flew over the Strait of Gibraltar from Morocco to Spain in the late afternoon of 5 April (per *Dutch Birding* 34: 256). On 9 February, a juvenile **Spanish Imperial Eagle** *Aquila adalberti* was noted 78 km south of Goulmine (*RJ*). An **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* was claimed from a pond along the Ifrane–Fes road on 20 March (*LHa*). During two hours of sea-watching (at 07.00–09.00 hrs) from Tarfaya harbour on 1 November, 26 **Sabine's Gulls** *Xema sabini* were counted, whilst an adult **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* was seen at Barrage Arabet, Bou-Areg, on 3 November ([www.go-south.org](http://www.go-south.org)). Vagrant waders included a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* at Casablanca on 29 September (*BM*) and a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* at Khnifiss on 2 November ([www.go-south.org](http://www.go-south.org)). The sixth **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* for Morocco was observed at Agadir on 29 October (*DW*).

#### Mozambique

An **African Black Oystercatcher** *Haematopus moquini* was reported from the Limpopo River mouth, Xai-Xai district, in August 2012. Two

**Black-naped Terns** *Sterna sumatrana* were seen in a large mixed tern flock at Pomene on 20–21 October. An **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* was photographed at Rio Savane on 25 December (*sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com*).

## Namibia

Records from May–December 2012 include the following. The most exciting and unexpected news from the period involved the **Black Skimmer** *Rynchops niger*, which was first observed at Rietvlei, South Africa (see below), appearing at Walvis Bay, c.1,250 km to the north, on 7 October and remaining there until 9th (*MB* & *OS* per *TH*). The second most remarkable find was that of a small population of **Angola Cave Chats** *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, on the southern slopes of the Zebra Mountains, in the north, in May; at least three pairs were seen, but further exploration of the area may well reveal larger numbers (*WS*). This discovery constitutes a considerable southward range extension of a species that was previously considered to be an Angolan endemic.

Other reports of interest include a **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* and a **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria (aequinotialis) conspicillata* photographed during a pelagic trip out of Walvis Bay in early July, with at least four **Wandering Albatrosses** c.60 nautical miles north-west of Walvis Bay in late July; a **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* at Erindi Private Game Reserve, near Omaruru, in late

November; a **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* at Walvis Bay sewage works on 22 July; a **Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaeetus occipitalis* at Hoochland Park, Windhoek, in late November; an immature **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* photographed just outside Luderitz on 29 November; up to three **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* at Mariental on 14–15 October (per *sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com*); and an **African Crane** *Crex egregia* at Namutoni, Etosha National Park (=NP) on 5 December (*PP*).

An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was at Walvis Bay from late September until at least 18 November, with another at Mile 4 Salt Works, north of Swakopmund, on 18 November (per *sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com*). In Etosha NP, two **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were reported from Rietfontein on 26 December (*JP*) and a **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* from Fisher's Pan also in late December. The partially leucistic **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*, first located at Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund, on 13 October 2011, was still present on 4 November. On 11 September, a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* was at Walvis Bay on the same pan as the (same?) individual at the end of 2011; it was still present in late November (Fig. 25). Variable numbers of **Red-necked Phalaropes** *P. lobatus* were present at Walvis Bay from July until the end of the year, with 6–9 in July–September, at least 40 in late October, and up to 60 in November.

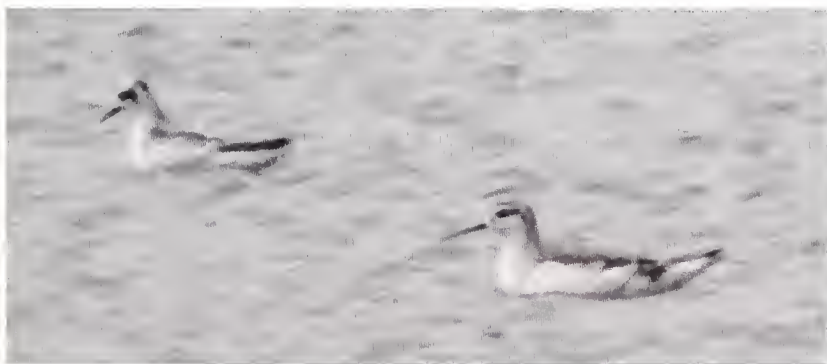
A **Red Phalarope** *P. fulicarius* was also there from 22 September until at least late November. A **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* stayed in Etosha NP in early December, with another at Walvis Bay in mid December.

At least four **Woodland Kingfishers** *Halcyon senegalensis* returned for the fourth successive season to Monte Christo, c.30 km north-east of Windhoek, in November; this is well south of their normal range. A pair of **Souza's Shrikes** *Lanius souzae* was feeding a juvenile in the Caprivi Strip in late November (per *sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com*).

## Niger

Records from April–December 2012 are as follows. Two juvenile **Saddle-billed Storks** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* were photographed in W International Park on 22 April; this is only the second record of juveniles from Niger (*HG, LL*). The highlight of the period is undoubtedly the **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*, satellite-tracked from Hungary, which remained in south-west Niger during late November and early December (*MH* & *MP*; see Africa Round-up); this is the first record of the species west of northern Cameroon. A **Fox Kestrel** *Falco alopex* was photographed on 3 September at the southern end of the Termit Range, in the newly gazetted, 97,000 km<sup>2</sup> National Natural and Cultural Reserve of Termit–Tin Toumma (*TR* & *AH*; Fig. 26); this is the northernmost record in Niger. A **Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* photographed near Mainé-Soroa on 20 June is the first record east of Dakoro / Maradi (*DK*). A male white-morph **African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* found 15 km south of Niamey on 27 May is the first record in the country outside W International Park (*SP, Cfi*).

Noteworthy records from earlier dates include the following. A **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* photographed at Galmi on 1 August 2011 is the first record in Niger east of the Niger River Valley (*DK*;



**Figure 25.** Wilson's Phalarope / Phalarope de Wilson *Phalaropus tricolor*, Walvis Bay, Namibia, 28 November 2012 (Phil Palmer)





**Figure 26.** Fox Kestrel / Crécerelle renard *Falco tinnunculus*, National Natural and Cultural Reserve of Termit-Tin Toumma, Niger, 3 September 2012 (Thomas Rabeil / Sahara Conservation Fund)

**Figure 27.** Lesser Moorhen / Gallinule africaine *Gallinula angulata*, Galmi, Niger, 1 August 2011 (David Kusserow)

**Figure 28.** Northern Wheatear / Traquet moiteux *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa*, Ténéré desert, Niger, 30 September 2010 (Thomas Rabeil / Sahara Conservation Fund)

**Figure 29.** Lesser Blue-eared Starling / Choucador de Swainson *Lamprolaima chrysolaema*, Galmi, Niger, 15 August 2011 (David Kusserow)

**Figure 30.** Albino Sudan Golden Sparrow / Moineau doré *Passer luteus*, Mainé-Soroa, Niger, 9 March 2011 (Barbie Kusserow)



**Fig. 27).** A **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* photographed in the Ténéré desert on 30 September 2010 proved to be of subspecies *leucorhoa*, which breeds in Iceland, Greenland and north-east Canada (TR; Fig. 28). A **Lesser Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprolaima chrysolaema* caught and photographed after a storm at Galmi on 15 August 2011 is only the third record for Niger (DK; Fig. 29). One of the photographs donated by the Kusserow family is of an albino **Sudan Golden Sparrow** *Passer luteus*, observed at Mainé-Soroa for at least three days in March 2011 (BK; Fig. 30). All records above are included in the Niger Bird DataBase [www.nibdb.org](http://www.nibdb.org) (JB & UL).

### Nigeria

A **Slender-billed Weaver** *Ploceus pelzelni* was photographed feeding a young **Didric Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius* on Bonny Island, one of Nigeria's coastal barrier islands, on 7 December 2010; although the weaver is known to parasitise Didric Cuckoo in East Africa, this is the first record for Nigeria (AE).

### Senegal

The first confirmed record for West Africa of **Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus* was a juvenile



**Figure 31.** Alpine Swift / Martinet à ventre blanc *Tachymarptis melba*, Djoudj National Park, Senegal, 5 March 2012 (Katharina Kühnert)

photographed at Gandiole, c.15 km south of St Louis, on 14 October 2012 (AH); details will be published in *Bull. ABC*. An **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* fatally hit the hotel in Djoudj National Park on 5 March (Fig. 31; KK).

### Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from the period June–November 2012 include the first **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus*, on Alphonse on 29 October (Fig. 32); two published records of this species from 1972–73 were accepted by SBRC as 'knot sp.'

A **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* on Aride on 8–10 October was the third report for Seychelles, the first two being from 2011. An **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* on Bijoutier on 2 November was the fourth for the archipelago and the first for the outer islands. A **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* on Alphonse on 26 November was also the first record for the outer islands (with 27 records from the granitic islands and Bird). A **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* on 30 October and a first-winter male **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* on 14 November, both on Bird, were fourth reports, whilst a female **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* on Bird on 13–16 November was the fifth.

Temporary rainwater pools on the reclaimed Île Persévérance attracted migrants including the third **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus* east of Aldabra (where it breeds) on 5 October (still present in early December; Fig. 33) and the fifth **Broad-billed Sandpiper**



32



34



37



*Limicola falcinellus* on 15 November. Also there were a **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* on 18 November (ten accepted records), a **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* on 17 November, a **Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* on 7–8 October, and a **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*.

Other notable sightings included single **Oriental Pratincoles** *Glareola*

35



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*maldivarum* on Bird on 29 October (Figs. 35–36), Bijoutier to Alphonse on 2–6 November and Desroches on 3–9 November; a **Ruff** on Bird on 13–24 November; single **Common Sand Martins** on Bird on 28 October (Fig. 34) and 12–14 November and Desroches on 29 October; a **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* on St. Anne on 10 November, with another on Bird on 2–15 November; single **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* on Alphonse on 12 November, Bird on 14–24 November and Desroches on 17–25

33



36



**Figure 32.** Red Knot *Calidris canutus* with Sanderlings *C. alba*, Point Dot, Alphonse, Seychelles, 29 October 2012 (Auréli Duhec)

Bécasseau maubèche *Calidris canutus* avec Bécasseaux sanderling *C. alba*, Point Dot, Alphonse, Seychelles, 29 octobre 2012 (Auréli Duhec)

**Figure 33.** Immature Greater Flamingo / Flamant rose *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus*, Île Persévérance, Seychelles, 6 December 2012 (Adrian Skerrett)

**Figure 34.** Common Sand Martin / Hirondelle de rivage *Riparia riparia*, Bird Island, Seychelles, 28 October 2012 (Johannes Ferdinand)

**Figures 35–36.** Oriental Pratincole / Glaréole orientale *Glareola maldivarum*, Bird Island, Seychelles, 29 October 2012 (Johannes Ferdinand)

**Figure 37.** Spotted Flycatcher / Gobemouche gris *Muscivora striata*, Bird Island, Seychelles, 29 October 2012 (Johannes Ferdinand)

**Figure 38.** Eurasian Golden Oriole / Lorient d'Europe *Oriolus oriolus*, Bird Island, Seychelles, 30 October 2012 (Johannes Ferdinand)



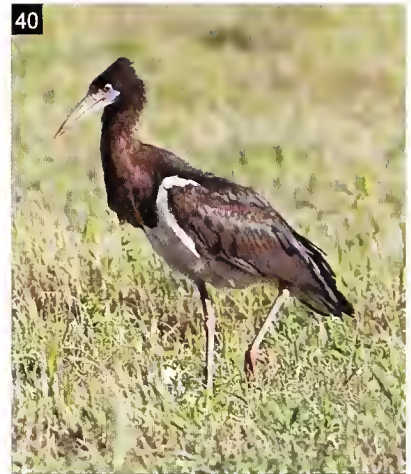
November; a **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* on Alphonse on 12 October, with another on Desroches on 1 November; and single **Spotted Flycatchers** *Muscicapa striata* on Bird on 29 October (Fig. 37), Mahé on 30 October and Alphonse on 14 November.

Also of interest were two **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* on Frégate on 16 October (seven records); a **Eurasian (Great) Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* on Frégate on 13 October (six records); a **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* on Bird on 12–19 November (five records); a **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* on Desroches on 1 November; a **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* on Bird on 13–16 November; a **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* on Bird on 12–23 November; a **Mascarene Martin** *Phedina borbonica* on St. François on 14 November (eight records); a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* on Bird on 14–24 November; and up to six **Eurasian Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* on Bird on 26 October–24 November (Fig. 38) (per AS).

### South Africa

Records from July–December 2012 include the following. The most unexpected report for the period is that of an adult **Black Skimmer** *Rynchops niger*, photographed at Riervlei, near Milnerton, Western Cape, on 4–5 October (RW & HW; Fig. 39); it was apparently of the North American nominate race and is the first record for Africa (an adult Black Skimmer flying south past County Mayo, Ireland, on 30 August, will be the first for the Western Palearctic if accepted: *Birding World* 25: 314).

Noteworthy species seen in the waters south and west of Cape Point include **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* (one in August; at least seven in September; at least four in October; one on 10 November), **Southern Royal Albatross** *D. epomophora* (one in August; at least two in September), **Northern Royal Albatross** *D. (epomophora) sanfordi* (two in July; three in August; at



**Figure 39.** Black Skimmer / Bec-en-ciseaux noir *Rynchops niger*, Riervlei, South Africa, 5 October 2012 (Trevor Hardaker)

**Figure 40.** Abdim's Stork / Cigogne d'Abdim *Ciconia abdimii*, Arniston, South Africa, 30 September 2012 (Trevor Hardaker)

**Figure 41.** Great Spotted Cuckoo / Coucou geai *Clamator glandarius*, Klipheuwel, South Africa, 5 July 2012 (Trevor Hardaker)

**Figure 42.** Pel's Fishing Owl / Chouette-pêcheuse de Pel *Scotopelia peli*, Newlands, Western Cape, South Africa, 14 October 2012 (Trevor Hardaker)

least one in September), **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria fusca* (three on 10 July), **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* (one on 4 August; at least five in September), **Spectacled**

**Petrel** *Procellaria (aequinoctialis) conspicillata* (singles in late October and late November), **White-headed Petrel** *Pterodroma lessonii* (singles on 10 July and 7 September), **Atlantic**

**Petrel** *P. incerta* (one on 10 July), **Blue Petrel** *Halobaena caerulea* (one on 2 September), **White-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta grallaria* (two at 160–190 nautical miles west of Cape Town on 11 October) and **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* (at least one in mid September; several in October). Seawatches from Cape Point produced an **Atlantic Petrel** on 3 July and two **Little Shearwaters** *Puffinus assimilis* on 7 July.

Species observed in the waters south of Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 1 August include **Wandering Albatross** (four; with several in early December), **Southern Royal Albatross** (one), **Northern Royal Albatross** (two), **Sooty Albatross** (one) and **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea* (at least two); a **Spectacled Petrel** was seen in early December. In the Eastern Cape, a **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus* was again present on Bird Island, Algoa Bay, in late October; it has been visiting the area for several seasons.

Two **Australian Gannets** *Morus serrator* remained on Malgas Island, in Saldanha Bay, Western Cape, from late October until at least early December, with a third individual on 15 November. In KwaZulu-Natal, single **Rufous-bellied Herons** *Ardeola rufiventris* were reported from Mtunzini on 24 August and Cape Vidal from 26 September until at least 28 October. An immature **Striated (Green-backed) Heron** *Butorides striata* was found at Helderberg Nature Reserve, Somerset West, on 7 July; this is a rare species in Western Cape. In the same province, a **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* was at Goose Valley Golf Course, on the Garden Route, on 18 August. An exceptional record for Western Cape was an **Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii* that remained near Arniston from 26 September until at least 13 October (Fig. 40); another was present between Springbok and Goegap Nature Reserve, Northern Cape, on 7 November. A **Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* stayed at George and the Knysna area, Western Cape, throughout July.

**Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus* were reported from Limpopo (one north of Letaba, Kruger National Park [=NP], on 14 July), KwaZulu-Natal (one at the Umzumbe River mouth in early July; at least eight near Bergville in mid July; a juvenile at Umvoti Vlei, south of Greytown, in late August; 24 in Stanger on 30 August), Eastern Cape (eight immatures at Boknes Lagoon, East London, on 8 July) and Western Cape (one at Prince Albert on 31 October). A juvenile **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* was at Sunset Dam, Kruger NP, Mpumalanga, in early August. A **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* at Rondevlei, Western Cape, was still present in early July.

In November–December, at least 17 reports were received of **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus*, mainly from Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, with one from Western Cape. In KwaZulu-Natal, an immature **Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus* was observed in Thula Thula Private Game Reserve, near Empangeni, on 3 August (a noteworthy record for the province) and three **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* near Winterton, outside their normal range, on 20 July. Single **Brown Snake Eagles** *Circaetus cinereus* were reported from Eastern Cape (at Lawrence de Lange Nature Reserve, north of Queenstown, on 9 October, and at Port Elizabeth on 8 November) and Western Cape (one photographed in Karoo NP on 29 December—first record for the park). **Bateleurs** *Terathopius ecaudatus* were seen near De Hoop Nature Reserve (an adult on 29 October) and in Wilderness (a juvenile in early November), both in Western Cape. In the same province, a large brown eagle first reported from Helderberg Nature Reserve on 7 September and tentatively identified as a **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax*, was photographed on 25 September. In KwaZulu-Natal, an **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* was at Mtunzini in early July, with another (or the same)

in Amatikulu Nature Reserve. In Western Cape, two **Long-crested Eagles** *Lophaelagus occipitalis* were reported for several months from the George / Mossel Bay and Somerset West areas, respectively; the latter was almost certainly the same individual that remained at Helderberg College from November 2010 into early 2011. Another was seen between Van Zylsrus and Askham, in the Kalahari, Northern Cape, on 29 November.

**Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* were observed in Augrabies NP, Northern Cape, in early October; at Nqweba Dam near Graaff-Reinet, Eastern Cape, on 4 November; and at Kgomo Kgomo, North West Province, on 28 November. An **African Crake** *Crex egregia* was photographed at Mata Mata Camp, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, on 22 December; there are no atlas records anywhere near this area.

A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* remained in West Coast NP, Western Cape, from early August until at least 11 September; another was at the Umfolozi River estuary, KwaZulu-Natal, on 20 November. **Temminck's Coursers** *Cursorius temminckii* were noted c.40 km south of Pofadder, Northern Cape (three in early July), c.20 km south of Vioolsdrif, Northern Cape (five in mid August), and at Olifantsbos near Cape Point, Western Cape (one on 1 December). A **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was located in West Coast NP, Western Cape, on 30 September. In KwaZulu-Natal, a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was found at Lake St. Lucia on 23 December. A **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* in breeding plumage at Geelbek, West Coast NP, on 20 October, was a remarkable record; there are very few confirmed reports in Southern Africa. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were observed in Mpumalanga (up to three at Mkhombo Dam in late September–December; one at Nsemani Dam, west of Satara, Kruger NP, on 17 November), North West Province (one in



the Kgomo Kgomo area in early November–December), KwaZulu-Natal (two in Phinda Private Game Reserve on 3–4 November), Eastern Cape (one at Tankatara Salt Pans, Port Elizabeth, on 30 November–1 December) and Western Cape (two at Vleesbaai, on the Garden Route, in late December). A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *C. (=Tryngites) subruficollis* was discovered at Waterfall Estate in Midrand, Gauteng, on 8 September. **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* were reported from KwaZulu-Natal (one in Umfolozi Game Reserve in early October, with another in the Durban Bay area on 28 October) and Gauteng (one at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 23 December). Inland records of **Bar-tailed Godwits** *L. lapponica* included two at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, from 30 September until at least 28 October; two at Midmar Dam, near Howick, KwaZulu-Natal, in October; and one at Victoria West Dam, Northern Cape, on 28 November. Up to two **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were present in West Coast NP, Western Cape, in September–December. **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were reported from Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal in late September–December. A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was in Addo National Park, Eastern Cape, on 25 November and a **Red Phalarope** near Belfast, Mpumalanga, on 6–7 October.

In KwaZulu-Natal, a **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* was reported from St. Lucia on 7–11 July, with another, in partial breeding plumage, near the Illovo River estuary on 20 July. The **Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus* at Cape Recife, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, was seen again from 20 July until at least mid August; it was assumed to be the same individual that has been visiting this site for more than ten years. In KwaZulu-Natal, an adult **Sooty Tern** *O. fuscatus* was intermittently observed between the Umfolozi and St. Lucia estuaries throughout the period. An **African**

**Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* was foraging at Kosi Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, in early October.

A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* was near Klipheuwel, Western Cape, on 3–13 July (Fig. 41), with a pair in Camdeboo NP, Eastern Cape, in early November. An **African Cuckoo** *Cuculus gularis* was c.50 km north-east of Graaff-Reinet, Eastern Cape, well outside its normal range, on 28 September, with another near De Hoop Nature Reserve, Bredasdorp, Western Cape, on 11 November. A **Madagascar Cuckoo** *C. rochii* remained near Biyamiti, in southern Kruger NP, on 16 November–9 December; this is apparently only the eighth confirmed record for the southern African subregion. A **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* in Newlands, Western Cape, on 14 October (apparently first seen there on 10 September) is the first photographically confirmed record for the province (Fig. 42); the bird was rediscovered in Constantia on 5 November. An **African Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii*, observed near Madikwe Game Reserve, North West Province, in late November, was c.300 km out of range.

In Northern Cape, a female **Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* was seen at Groenriver, in Namaqua NP, in late July, far from this species' normal habitat. A **White-fronted Bee-eater** *Merops bullockoides* first noted at Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, in late June, was still there on 8 July. A small group was reported near Winterton, KwaZulu-Natal, on 7–14 July. Also of interest is a report of a **Madagascar Bee-eater** *M. superciliosus* in KwaZulu-Natal on 5 November—a remarkable record for the province. A **Southern Carmine Bee-eater** *M. nubicoides* just outside Gansbaai, Western Cape, on 23 December, was >1,000 km outside its normal range.

In Northern Cape, a **Lesser Striped Swallow** *Cecropis abyssinica* was reported in a flock of Greater Striped *C. cucullata* and South African Cliff Swallows *Petrochelidon spilodera* c.30 km south-east of De

Aar on 10 November, well outside the known range. A **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* was located at Riviersonderend Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 3 August, with another at Magoebaskloof, Limpopo, on 29 November. A **Groundscraper Thrush** *Psophocichla litsitsirupa* was relocated in Bredasdorp, Western Cape, on 14 July. In late December, a small population of **Wing-snapping** (Ayres's) **Cisticolas** *Cisticola ayresii* was discovered in the Harkersville area, near Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, c.250 km east of the nearest known locality in the Port Elizabeth area. A **Grey Tit-Flycatcher** *Myioparus plumbeus* at Augrabies Falls NP, Northern Cape, on 16 November, was a surprising record for the area. In Gauteng, a **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* in a Johannesburg garden on 4–5 December, attracted c.500 birders; it was apparently only the ninth record for South Africa. In the same province, a far out of range ruddy morph **Olive Bushshrike** *Telophorus olivaceus* was encountered in Florauna, Pretoria North, on 14 September. Noteworthy was a **Crimson-breasted Shrike** *Laniarius atrococcineus* of the rare yellow morph in Mokala NP, Northern Cape, on 27 December. Also of interest is a report of a **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* at Lower Sabie camp, Mpumalanga, on 12 August. A male **Black-headed Canary** *Serinus alario* observed near Creighton, KwaZulu-Natal, on 30 October, is a new record for the province (per *TH; sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com*).

## Sudan

Records from the Kharthoum area in August–November 2012 include the following. At Soba Pools, at least four **Hottentot Teals** *Anas hottentota* and one **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* were observed on 17 August; Nikolaus (1987. *Distribution Atlas of Sudan's Birds*) mentions only a single record for each species, but prior to the rainy season they were seen more or less regularly in the area. At least 42 **Hottentot Teals** were there on 25 October. A juvenile

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* seen on the same date may suggest the first breeding record for the country. In Sunt Forest, a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*, a species described as rare by Nikolaus (1987), was photographed on 9 November (TJ). A **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*, considered rare inland, was at Al Dabbaseen bridge on 30 November (JD). A **Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons* was on the lake at Jebel Aulia on 14 September. A **White-headed Babbler** *Turdoides leucopygia* photographed with nesting material on Tuti Island on 28 September may constitute the first confirmed breeding record for Sudan (TJ).

### Swaziland

A **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was photographed in Mbuluzi Game Reserve on 20 July 2012; the record of this scarcely reported species is noteworthy as it is quite far south and in winter (per [sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com](mailto:sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com)).

### Tanzania

An **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* was observed at Seronera Lodge, in the Serengeti, in October 2012; this is the first record for Tanzania (Fig. 43; per [tanzaniabirdatlas.com/news-habari.html](http://tanzaniabirdatlas.com/news-habari.html)).

During a trip in October 2012 almost all of the Eastern Arc endemics were observed, among which the trickiest probably include **Udzungwa Forest Partridge** *Xenoperdix udzungwensis* (seven individuals seen on three out of four days in the Luala Valley on 18th–21st), **Usambara Eagle Owl**



**Figure 43.** Ortolan Bunting / Bruant ortolan *Emberiza hortulana*, Serengeti, Tanzania, 12 October 2012 (Larry Wilson)

*Bubo vosseleri* (one seen well at Amani on 11th), **Usambara Hyliota** *Hyliota usambarae* (a pair foraging in the treetops below Amani on 12th) and **Uluguru Bushshrike** *Malaconotus alius* (one observed in the Ulugurus on 25th) (NB).

### Zimbabwe

Records from January–November 2012 include the following. At Lake Manyame, 145 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* were counted on 12 July (IR). On 25 July, 46 **African Spoonbills** *Platalea alba* were observed at Biri Dam, near Chinhoyi, where they were breeding (DR-G). Also there on the same date were four **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus* (KD). An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was seen at Hippo Pools, Mazowe River, on 15 January (TN), with another at Biri Dam, Hunyani River, near Chinhoyi, on 27 July (per DR-G). A **Red-necked Falcon** *Falco chicquera* was at Rifa Camp, Zambezi River, near Chirundu, on 17–20 February (KD). Waders included 12 **Common Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula* at Bumi, Kariba, in March (IR), two **Long-toed Lapwings** *Vanellus crassirostris* at Lake Manyame on 9 June (RD), a **Whimbrel** *Numerius phaeopus* at Bumi in March (IR) and a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* at Monavale Vlei, Harare, on 18 March (KD). A pair of **Whiskered Terns** *Chlidonias hybrida* was seen at Chikokerano Pan, Marondera District, on 25 March (AM) and 15 **White-winged Terns** *C. leucopterus* at Lake Manyame on 12 July (IR). At Rainham Dam, Harare, an **African Grass Owl** *Tyto capensis* was recorded on 14 January (AM). The remains of a **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* were found under a **Crowned Eagle's** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* nest at Hippo Pools in early September (LvdM). In August–September, a large grassfire in Monavale Vlei, Harare, flushed 12 **Marsh Owls** *Asio capensis* (per DR-G).

A **Red-eyed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus nigricans* was found at the National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, on 23 September; the species only appears

there in very dry years (per DR-G). In Harare, an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* was observed at Monavale Vlei on 18 March (KD). A nest of **Livingstone's Flycatcher** *Erythrocerus livingstonei* was found at Hippo Pools, Shamva District, on 2–4 March (TN). Four **Lesser Grey Shrikes** *Lanius minor*, flying north through Mashonaland, were reported on 31 March–9 April (per DR-G). A **Crimson-breasted Shrike** *Lanius atrococcineus* of the rare yellow morph was reported from Main Camp, Hwange National Park, on 30 July–2 August (AE). **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis*, which first appeared in Zimbabwe at the turn of the century, was found to have reached Harare, where two were seen on 8 November (RK). A pair of **Swee Waxbills** *Coccyzygia melanotis* was recorded c.15 km from Inn on the Rupurara River, Nyanga District, on 31 August–3 September (RD). An expedition to Hwedza Mountain, organised by the Mashonaland Branch of BirdLife Zimbabwe on 21–24 September to search for **Swee Waxbill** found a nest-building male; the species was last seen there 20 years ago. A pair of **Magpie Mannikins** *Lonchura fringilloides* was seen at their nest at Ewanrigg Botanic Gardens on 26 February (NH).

A South African expedition to the Eastern Highlands, on 4–12 November, observed **Green-backed Woodpecker** *Campethera cailliautii*, **Pallid Honeyguide** *Indicator meliphilus* and **Pale Batis** *Batis soror* at Gleneagles, **Lesser Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes minor* and **Magpie Mannikins** at Katiyo Tea Estate, Mutasa District, and a pair of **Gurney's Sugarbirds** *Promerops gurneyi* at Seldomseen (DR-G).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Vaughan & Svetlana Ashby / Birdfinders (VA & SA), Andre Birkenstock (AB), Mark Boorman (MB), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NB), Joost Brouwer / Niger Bird Database (JB), Dave Chantler (DC), Mary Crickmore (MC), Richard Dennison (RD), Julie Dewilde (JD), Ken Dixon (KD), Adele Edwards (AE), Augustine



U. Ezealor (AE), Ali Flatt (AF), J. Franchimont (JF), Paul French (PF), Merid Gabremichael (MG), Agnès Giannotti (AG), Hélène Gobin (HG), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Lee Harding (LHa), Abdoulaye Harouna / Sahara Conservation Fund (AH), Nick Hart (NH), Alexander Hiley (AHi), David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours (DH), Naftali Honig (NHo), Márton Horváth / BirdLife Hungary (MH), Lee Hunter (LH), Ryan Irvine (RI), Runar Jåbekk (RJ), Colin Jackson (CJ), Cecile Jiménez (CJi), Tom Jenner (TJ), Rob Kelly (RK), Katharina Kühnert (KK), Barbie Kusserow (BK), David Kusserow (DK), Laurent Labbé (LL), Ulf Liedén (UL), Markus Lilje / Rockjumper Birding

Tours (ML), B. Maire (BM), A. Masterson (AM), Leon van der Merwe (LvdM), Johannes & Sharon Merz (JM & SM), Michael Mills / Birding Africa (MM), Mark Müller (MMu), Tadius Ndadzira (TN), Phil Palmer / Bird Holidays (PP), Jan Pienaar / Rockjumper Birding Tours (JP), Sharmila Pillai (SP), Bram Piot (BPi), Bruno Portier (BP), Mátyás Prommer / BirdLife Hungary (MP), Thomas Rabeil / Sahara Conservation Fund (TR), Hugo Rainey (HR), Ian Ridell (IR), Dave Rockingham-Gill (DR-G), Steve Rooke / Sunbird (SR), Cuan Rush / Rockjumper Birding Tours (CR), Otto Schmidt (OS), J. L. Singh (JS), Roger Skeen (RS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Wessel Swanepoel (WS), Tony

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## Owls of the World: A Photographic Guide

Heimo Mikkola, 2012. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 512 pp, 750 colour photographs. Hardback. ISBN 978-1-4081-3028-5. UK£35.00.

With 50 years of research behind him, Heimo Mikkola is surely one of the most distinguished authorities on owls. One can well understand why he would have been selected to write this publisher-conceived title, but it is less a synthesis of any new research on these birds, and more a sumptuous visual essay on his two favourite families.

The bulk of the book comprises short synoptic essays on all of the world's owls, each accompanied by a selection of high-quality photographs. Most of the species are treated over a one- or two-page spread, with a maximum of seven images over four pages. However this more detailed coverage is reserved for a few highly charismatic family members, such as Spotted Little Owl *Athene brama* of South Asia, or for very diverse polytypic species, like the Afro-Palearctic migrant Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*.

There is also a valuable 70-page introduction to the entire order that tackles generic themes, including conservation, taxonomy, the birds' life histories and ecology. Mikkola is well known for his

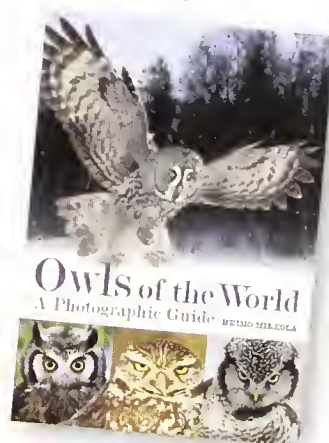
360-degree scholarship and he includes additional sections on more unfamiliar subjects, such as abnormally plumaged birds, the recorded incidents of longevity across various owl species, as well as historical and contemporary cultural responses to the family. In many regions owls are still objects of superstition and the author offers a hope that his book will help correct these baseless prejudices.

The main subject covered in the author's individual species accounts is that of identification. The rest of the text is organised under several key headings—vocalisations, food and hunting, habitat, status and distribution, geographical variation and similar species—usually with just two or three sentences per topic. The species entries are completed by very clear distribution maps, which have been largely borrowed from another Helm title, *Owls of the World* by Claus König, Friedhelm Weick and Jan-Hendrik Becking.

The taxonomy that underpins the book may prove to be a source of controversy for informed strigophiles. Mikkola has divided the two owl families into 249 species, largely following Helm's *Owls of the World* (König *et al.* 2008), which represents a substantial increase on pre-existing totals. For example, Gill and Donsker's IOC World Bird List (version 3.2, 2012) lists 229 species,

while the present working total in the BirdLife International checklist is 201 species. The systematics adopted by Mikkola expands the genus *Tyto* to 24 species, *Otus* to 48 species and *Bubo* to 25 species. Indeed, the book elevates four taxa to species level for the first time, one of which, the Santa Marta Screech Owl *Megascops* sp., has yet to be officially described.

It is a measure of how thoroughly the author and editors have done their picture research that only a handful of species lack photographic images, including the very recently described Pernambuco Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium minutissimum*. Yet it is notable that the other seven species that have all been described to science only since the beginning of this century are here in glorious technicolour. In many ways it is this comprehensive





library of 750 colour images that is the book's major contribution. The photographs are, with few unavoidable exceptions, pin-sharp images and while they are largely of perched birds, there is a liberal sprinkling of stunning action shots. The full body of visual imagery is the work of more than 200 photographers worldwide and while it is difficult to single out any one practitioner, the contributions by Vincenzo Penteriani are notable for the sense of intimacy that they bring to creatures otherwise famous for their inaccessibility and secrecy.

Mark Cocker

## Birds of Seychelles

Adrian Skerrett and Tony Disley, 2011. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 176 pp, 65 colour plates. Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4081-5151-8. UK£24.99.

*Birds of Seychelles* is an updated and compact version of the 2001 guide of the same name, published in the Helm Field Guides series. The publication of the first guide was something of a landmark in terms of the species covered and the sheer amount of information contained; this new guide is a slim and efficient volume covering all of the species recorded reliably in the Seychelles up to mid 2011.

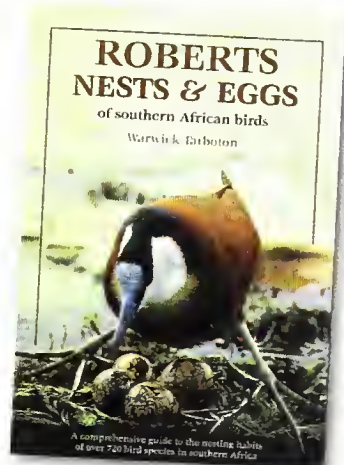
The new publication includes 65 plates and 1,000 illustrations, of which >90 are new, and sports a

completely revised text. This covers 254 of the 257 species recorded. The introductory sections in the book are minimal but informative, covering geography, climate and Important Bird Areas. There are also appendices including a checklist of bird names in English, French and Creole. There are no distribution maps, but given the geography of the islands these are not essential. Most of the guide, 130 pages, is devoted to the description and illustration of resident, migrant, vagrant and introduced birds. The illustrations are great and the text clear and concise, conveying just what you need to identify a species.

The Seychelles appear to be just close enough to Africa and Asia to act as a wintering site for shorebirds and as a landfall for vagrants, and some of the smaller islands with limited habitat make perfect sites for vagrant hunters. Aside from the staggering seabird colonies, engaging endemics and perhaps not so desirable introduced birds, you never know what you may find on the Seychelles.

Some of the difficult species groups that may be encountered are well covered. For example, cuckoos, falcons and snipes include a range of similar species that could reach the archipelago from Europe, Asia or Africa, and the guide is more than adequate to clinch their identification. Some species would have benefited from a larger number of illustrations depicting different races or plumages, but the guide has struck a sensible trade-off so that more space could be allocated for some of the variable resident species.

Could I find anything to criticise? Well no, it's a fine work. I am mindful that the large range of species covered may make it difficult for some audiences to access the information. Casual birders and, in particular, school children may find it difficult to use, and a cut-down version focusing on the regular species would be great for education and engagement. But as a single resource to take with you to the Seychelles, this compact and comprehensive guide certainly does the job. You may well encounter



species not covered in the guide, but they will be national firsts.

James Millett

## Roberts—Nests & Eggs of Southern African Birds

Warwick Tarboton, 2011. Cape Town: The John Voelcker Bird Book Fund / Jacana Media. 415 pp, 1,300 colour photographs and 48 plates showing life-size photographic images of 1,200 eggs of almost 700 species. Flexibound. ISBN 978-0-620-50629-8. UK£27.95.

This book concerns the nesting habits of the c.730 species that breed in Africa south of the line formed by the Zambezi and Kunene rivers. It is partly a new production and partly a revision of *A Guide to the Nests and Eggs of Southern African Birds* by the same author, published in 2001, and reviewed in *Bull. ABC* 9: 161. The book's layout is that of a modern field guide, with text pages facing the colour photographs, and 4–5 species per double-page spread. Photographs of adults / nests and eggs (and a few nestlings) are included for 680 species, with many nests illustrated for the first time. The photographs, by 87 different photographers, are generally excellent and many are stunning. In some cases, colour has been added to older black and white photos, cleverly so, because these transformed images are almost impossible to separate from the rest.

The plates showing eggs in collections appear at the back of the book, but are well referenced to the



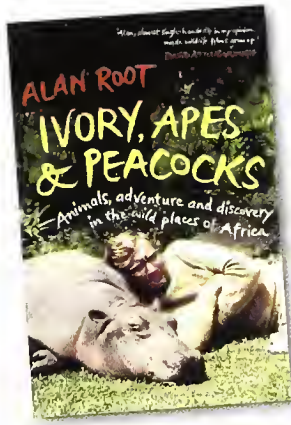
text pages. All eggs are depicted at life size, the huge egg of a Common Ostrich *Struthio camelus* filling most of one plate, but with eggs of >50 species displayed on the plate dealing with waxbills, whydahs, indigobirds, canaries and buntings. Where there is variation, two or more images are included, with 14 different examples of the highly variable eggs of Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*. Those interested in breeding biology will have been disappointed that the seven volumes of *The Birds of Africa* did not include plates of eggs, but this book (and the original work) superbly fills this gap for southern Africa.

The concise species texts cover habitat, nest site, nest, laying season, clutch size, egg size, incubation and nestling periods, and the role of the sexes in nest building, incubation and parental care. Nests are particularly well described, with detailed measurements for almost all.

An introductory chapter includes sections on family order and species names, nests, eggs, a detailed explanation of the sub-paragraphs within the species accounts, useful equipment for studying nests, and a two-page glossary of terms. There is a map of the region, coloured according to the distribution of different habitats—desert, karoo, fynbos, grassland, montane forest and savanna.

This is an excellent book, and is thoroughly recommended to anyone with even the slightest interest in nesting birds. My only criticism is that its scope might have been extended to include brief descriptions of nestlings. There are many nestlings in Africa yet to be described, and small text additions would have helped to identify the gaps in our knowledge.

Peter Castell



### **Ivory, Apes and Peacocks: Animals, Adventure and Discovery in the Wild Places of Africa**

Alan Root, 2012. London, UK: Chatto & Windus. 307 pp, 16 pages of colour photographs. ISBN 978-0-70118-603-6 (hardback) and 978-0-70118-604-3 (soft-back). UK£20.

Alan Root is one of the pioneers of wildlife filming in Africa with several major credits to his name. He was born in UK in 1937 and was initially furious at having to leave Britain shortly after the end of the Second World War because he had just learnt to identify all of the birds he was seeing, meaning that he was going to have to start afresh. However, Kenya was a revelation and he has lived in East Africa ever since.

His films were groundbreaking at the time and often recorded behaviour and activities new to science, although he has almost never written up his observations formally. Examples include the breeding behaviour of hornbills (in the film about the baobab tree) and the activities of hippos and crocodiles underwater (at Mzima springs in Tsavo West). Another film brought ballooning safaris to

Serengeti, and *Mysterious Castles of Clay* (much of it filmed from inside a termite mound) was nominated for an Oscar. Along the way there have been many adventures of course, including contretemps with hippos, puff adders and others, and interesting encounters with a wide variety of animals. One claim to fame was introducing Dian Fossey to Mountain Gorillas *Gorilla g. beringei*. He has had his disappointments too.

Alan Root has travelled more than most in the Democratic Republic of Congo and he remains one of the relatively few people to have seen (and filmed) the Congo Peacock *Afropavo congensis* in the wild (see *Bull. ABC* 2: 42). This trip (which also filmed Okapi *Okapia johnstoni*, Aquatic Genet *Osbornictis piscivora* and Water Chevrotain *Hyemoschus aquaticus*) was an adventure in itself and included being pinned beneath a heavily laden motorbike in deep mud. Luckily, the only person he had passed in about eight hours of riding was only a mile or so earlier and heading in the right direction. However, he was extremely drunk and Alan had great difficulty in persuading him to help. At the end too, when he was flying himself out of DRC for the last time, he was well into Rwandan airspace when he heard a BBC newflash reporting that a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi had been shot down a few hours earlier. A hasty change of direction was required.

This is a well-written and moving autobiography of a remarkable man who has lived through a turbulent period for conservation and wildlife in eastern Africa, and who has often been responsible for showing us all just how remarkable some of the region's wildlife is.

Peter Lack



## Otto Appert: 1930–2012

On 29 May 2012 Father Otto Appert died in Ruswill, Switzerland, at the age of 82. He was born on 31 August 1930 and was the last of nine children. After studying in Nuolen and Werthenstein, Switzerland, he was ordained as a priest before being sent to Madagascar in 1959, where his main responsibilities were to conduct pastoral work in the Diocese of Morombe, Toliara, and paleontological research. During the next seven years, Father Appert collected much fossil material before returning to his native Switzerland. Between 1966 and 1973 he published on his paleontological findings, work still considered an outstanding contribution to Late Palaeozoic and Mesozoic paleobotany. His final publication in paleobotany appeared when he was 77 years old (Barale & Appert 2007). In 2004 Appert received the Amanz Gressly Prize from the Paleontological Society of Switzerland for his remarkable contributions to paleobotany.

In 1973–90 Appert returned to Morombe and spent significant time further north in Manja, Toliara, where he continued collecting paleontological material, as well as being involved in botanical and ornithological work. Shortly after arriving in Madagascar in 1959, Appert started making observations on the region's birds. He rapidly focused on the breeding biology of endemic birds at the Mangoky Delta (Appert 1966a,b, 1967, 1968a,b,c,d) and more broadly in the area located between Toliara and Morombe. This research, published in the 1960s and 1970s, still forms an important base on the birds of western Madagascar. He described many important aspects of the natural history of endemics such as Madagascar Crested Ibis *Lophotibis cristata* (Appert 1966a), Long-tailed Ground Roller *Uratelornis chimaera* (Appert 1968b), Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller *Leptosomus discolor* (Appert 1968a), Bensch's Mesite *Monias benschi* (Appert 1968c), couas (*Coua* spp.) (Appert 1966b, 1967, 1970a, 1980) and vangas (Vangidae) (Appert 1968d, 1970b). These publications remain primary references in modern Malagasy ornithology. He also discovered a new species



Father Otto Appert (Olivier Langrand)

in Zombitse forest, near Sakaraha, which was described in the early 1970s (Colston 1972) and named after him, Appert's Tetraka *Xanthomixis apperti* (originally in the genus *Phyllastrephus*).

Appert also published on migrants such as flamingos and shorebirds that were not known or poorly assessed with respect to their presence on the island. He continued to publish regularly in the 1980s and 1990s including on endemics such as the genus *Newtonia* (Appert 1997), *Tylas eduardi* and Bensch's Mesite (e.g., Appert 1985).

Most of his ornithological work, >25 publications, was published in German in *Journal für Ornithologie* or *Der Ornithologischer Beobachter*, although a few were in French. He pioneered the inclusion of bird photographs in articles (Appert 1966a,b, 1967, 1968a,b,e, 1980), providing an important visual element of species that in

some cases had not been previously illustrated and were largely unknown to scientists. He was always very precise in his reports, which made his publications even more valuable at a time when information Madagascar's birds was limited as very few observers worked the country during the socialist Second Republic from 1975 to 1992.

I was privileged to meet Appert several times, first in Madagascar during the 12 years I spent there between 1980 and 1996, but also in Switzerland in 1992, where he was recovering from health problems. He always welcomed the opportunity to discuss bird matters, sharing his experience and ideas in his faint voice and his rolling accent as we conversed in French. Appert worked independently, regularly publishing papers as a sole author, only three times as or with a co-author, to high scientific standards. His name will remain attached to a few species of the flora and the fauna of Madagascar: in addition to Appert's Tetraka, a snake has been named for him (*Liophidium apperti*) (Domergue 1984), as well as two plants, an aquatic plant (*Appertiella hexandra*) (Cook & Triest 1982) and a croton (*Croton appertii*) (Leandri 1976).

Father Appert leaves a large collection of publications, the last, on the breeding biology of birds in the Mangoky region, published when he was 81 years old (Appert 2011), which will continue to capture the interest of scientists and students intrigued by Madagascar and the island's unique biodiversity, and indirectly will contribute to its protection.

Olivier Langrand

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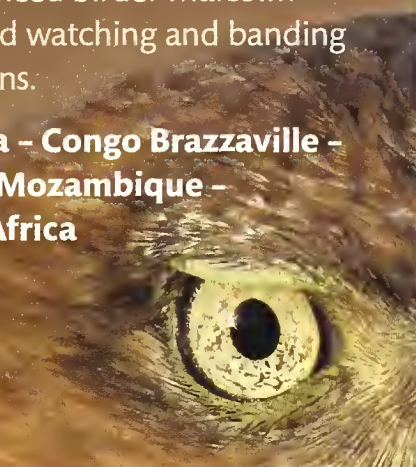
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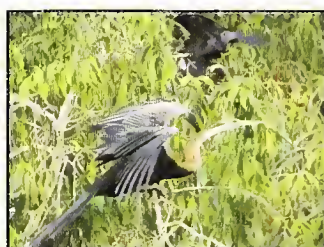
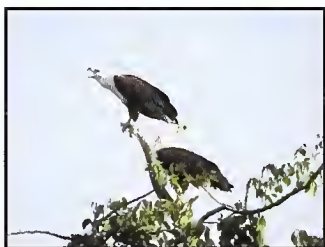
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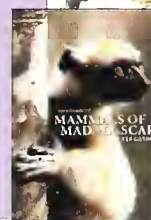
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**Zimbabwe:** The Executive Officer, BirdLife Zimbabwe, PO Box RVL100, Runiville, Harare. E-mail: birds@zol.co.zw.

The ABC Representatives scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the bulletin, and possibly to arrange local meetings for members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representative in the first instance with queries relating to the Club. ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities to invest the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Secretary at the Club address, e-mail membership@africanbirdclub.org.

ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries, principally within the Club's region: Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, São Tomé & Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha and USA.

to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Keith Betton, who is also custodian of ABC's journal library, at 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. E-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org.

### AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1-2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoo.com. You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the Membership Secretary: membership@africanbirdclub.org.

### Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own

names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officerholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

### ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee



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